The CARTER GIRLS

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"Oh, you must be Gwen!" exclaimed Douglas, coming forward—*Page* 176

THE CARTER GIRLS

BY

NELL SPEED

AUTHOR OF "THE MOLLY BROWN SERIES," "AT BOARDING SCHOOL WITH THE TUCKER TWINS," "VACATION WITH THE TUCKER TWINS," ETC.

WITH FOUR HALF-TONE ILLUSTRATIONS BY ARTHUR O. SCOTT

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THE CARTER GIRLS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CARTERS.

"I don't believe a word of it!"

"But, Helen, the doctor ought to know."

"Of course he ought to know, but does he know? If doctors agreed among themselves, I'd have more use for them. A poor patient has to submit to having everything the doctors are interested in for the time being. A specialist can always find you suffering with his specialty. Didn't old Dr. Davis treat Father for malaria because he himself, forsooth, happened to be born in the Dismal Swamp, got malaria into his system when he was a baby and never got it out? All his patients must have malaria, too, because Dr. Davis has it."

"Yes, Helen, that is so, but you see Father's symptoms *were* like malaria in a way," and Doug-

las Carter could not help laughing at her sister, although she well knew that the last doctor's diagnosis of her father's case was no laughing matter.

"Oh, yes, and then the next one, that bushy-whiskered one with his stomach pump and learned talk of an excess of hydrochlorics! Of course he found poor dear Daddy had a stomach, though he had never before been aware of it. All the Carters are such ostriches——"

"So we are if we blindly bury our heads in the sand and refuse to see that this last doctor is right, and——"

"I meant ostrich stomachs and not brains."

"Shhh! Here come the children! Let's don't talk about it before them yet. They'll have to know soon enough." And Douglas, the eldest of the five Carters, tried to smooth her troubled brow and look as though she and Helen had been discussing the weather.

"Know what? I'm going, too, if it's a movie," declared Lucy, a long-legged, thirteen-year-old girl who reminded one of nothing so much as a

thorough-bred colt—a colt conscious of its legs but meaning to make use of those same legs to out-distance all competitors in the race to be run later on.

"I don't believe it's movies," said Nan, the fifteen-year-old sister, noting the serious expression of Douglas's usually calm countenance. "I believe something has happened. Is it Bobby?" That was the very small brother, the joy and torment of the whole family.

The Carters formed stair steps with a decided jump off at the bottom. Douglas was eighteen; Helen, seventeen; Nan, fifteen; Lucy, thirteen; and then came a gap of seven years and Bobby, who had crowded the experiences of a lifetime into his six short years, at least the life-long experiences of any ordinary mortal. He was always having hair-breadth escapes so nearly serious that his family lived in momentary terror of each being the last.

"No, it's not Bobby," said Douglas gravely. "It's Father!"

"But nothing serious! Not Daddy!" exclaimed

the two younger girls and both of them looked ready for tears. "Can't the new doctor cure him?"

"Yes, he thinks he can, but it is going to be up to us to help," and Douglas drew Lucy and Nan down on the sofa beside her while Helen stopped polishing her pretty pink nails and planted herself on an ottoman at her feet. "All of you must have noticed how thin Father is getting and how depressed he is——"

"Yes, yes! Not a bit like himself!"

"Well, it wasn't malaria, as Dr. Davis thought; and it wasn't stomach trouble, as Dr. Drew thought; and the surgeon's X-ray could not show chronic appendicitis, as Dr. Slaughter feared,——"

"Feared, indeed!" sniffed Helen. "Hoped, you mean!"

"But this new nerve specialist that comes here from Washington, so highly recommended——"

"If he was doing so well in Washington, why did he come to Richmond?" interrupted the scorn-

ful Helen, doubtful as usual of the whole medical fraternity.

"I don't know why, honey, but if he can help Father, we should be glad he did come."

"If, indeed! Another barrel of tonics and bushel of powders, I suppose!"

"Not at all! This new man, Dr. Wright, says 'no medicine at all.' Now this is where we come in."

"Mind, Helen, Douglas says 'come in,' not 'butt in,' " said Lucy pertly. "You interrupt so much that Nan and I don't know yet what's the matter with Daddy and how we are to help him."

"Well, who's interrupting now? I haven't said a word for half an hour at least," said Helen brazenly.

"Oh, oh, what'll I do?" which was Carter talk for saying, "You are fibbing."

"You're another!"

"Girls, girls, this is not helping. It's just being naughty," from the eldest.

"Go on, Douglas, don't mind them. Helen and Lucy would squabble over their crowns and harps

in Heaven," said the peace-loving Nan. And the joke of squabbling in Heaven restored order, and Douglas was able to go on with what she had to tell.

"Dr. Wright says it is a case of nervous prostration and that a complete change is what Father needs and absolute rest from business. He thinks a sea trip of two months, and a year in the country are absolutely essential."

"And will that make him all the way well?" asked Helen. "If it does, I'll take off my yachting cap to this Dr. Wright as having some sense, after all. I mean to have a lovely new yachting suit for the trip."

Helen was by all odds the most stylish member of the family, and, some thought, the beauty; but others preferred the more serene charm of Douglas, who was a decided blonde with Titian hair and complexion to match. Helen's hair was what she scornfully termed a plain American brown, neither one thing nor the other, but it was abundant and fine and you may be sure it was always coiffed in the latest twist.

Nan had soft dark curls and dreamy dark eyes and spoke with a drawl. She did not say much, but when she did speak it was usually to say something worth listening to.

Lucy was as yet too coltish to classify, but she had a way of carrying her bobbed head with its shock of chestnut hair and tilting her pretty little pointed chin which gave her sisters to understand that she intended to have her innings later on, but not so very much later on.

"A new yachting suit! Just listen to Helen! Always got to be dressing up!" declared Lucy, ever ready for battle with the second sister. "I should think you would blush," and, indeed, Helen's face was crimson.

"Oh, I did not mean to forget Father, but if I have to have a new suit, I just thought I would have it appropriate for the sea trip."

"I'm going to learn how to climb like a sailor," from Lucy.

"I'm going to take a chest full of poetry to read on the voyage," from Nan.

"But, girls, girls! We are not to go,—just

Father and Mother! The way we are to help is to stay at home and take care of ourselves and Bobby. How do you think Father could get any rest with all of us tagging on?"

"Not go! Douglas Carter, you are off your bean! How could we get along without Mother and Father and how under Heaven could they get along without us? What does Mother say?" asked Helen.

"She hasn't said anything yet. The doctor is still with Father. Dr. Wright says Father must have quiet and no discussions going on around him. He says every one must be cheerful and arrangements must be made for the trip without saying a word to Father."

"Is Mother to make them?" drawled Nan, and everybody laughed.

It was an excruciating joke to expect Mrs. Carter to make a move or take the initiative in anything. Her rôle was ever to follow the course of least resistance, and up to this time that course had led her only by pleasant places. Like some pretty little meadow stream she had meandered

through life, gay and refreshing, if shallow withal, making glad the hearts of many just by her pleasant sweetness; but no one had expected any usefulness from her, so she had given none.

Twenty years ago, fresh from the laurels of a brilliant winter, her debutante year in New Orleans, the beautiful Miss Sevier had taken the White Sulphur by storm. Only one figure at one German had been enough to show Robert Carter that she was the only girl for him; and as he was the type that usually got what he started out to get, and also was by all odds the best looking young man at the White, besides being a very promising architect who had plenty of work waiting for him in Richmond, Annette Sevier naturally succumbed to his wooing, and in three weeks' time their engagement was announced. She was an exquisite girl, a Creole beauty of a daintiness and charm that appealed to every fibre of Bob Carter's being. She had been a beautiful girl and was still a beautiful woman; under forty, she looked more like the elder sister of her great girls than like their mother.

"I confess to Bobby," she would say, "and maybe to Lucy, although her long legs make me a little doubtful of her being really mine—but you other girls, you must be changelings."

Robert Carter had worked hard to keep his dainty love in all the comforts that she needed. I will not say expected or demanded,—she did neither of those disagreeable or ungraceful things. Comfort and elegance were just necessary to her environment and one could no more accuse her of selfishness than tax a queen for receiving homage.

If a dainty, elegant wife with no idea that money was more than something to spend takes hard work to keep, surely four growing girls with the extravagant ideas of the young persons of the day meant redoubled and tripled labour. Then there was Bobby! It took still more money to furnish him with all the little white linen sailor suits that his doting mother considered necessary for him. She thought nothing of having two dozen made up at one time, and those of the purest and finest linen. Bob, Sr., looking

over the bill for those same two dozen suits, did have a whimsical thought that with all that equipment it would be gratifying if just once he could see Bob, Jr., clean; but the only way to see Bobby clean was to lie in wait for him on the way from the bath; then and then only was he clean.

As a rule, however, Robert Carter accepted the bills as part of the day's work. If they were larger than usual, then he would just work a little harder and get more money. An inborn honor of debt kept him out of it. He had all the orders he could fill and was singularly successful in competitive designs. His health had always been perfect and his energy so great that action was his normal state.

And now what was this thing that had come upon him? A strange lassitude that made it almost impossible for him to get up in the morning, a heaviness of limbs and an irascibility that was as foreign to him as weakness. It had been going on for several weeks and he had run the gamut of doctors, impatient of their failures. They agreed on only one thing and that was that

he must rest. How could he rest? Weren't there five pairs of legs demanding silk stockings (even Lucy insisted that her lean shanks be clothed in the best)? Suits and hats must be bought with each change of season for the whole family, shirtwaists and shoes, lingerie of the finest. It took four servants besides the chauffeur to run their establishment. Their butcher's bills were only equalled by the dairy bills, their grocery bills by their gasoline. "Rest, indeed! They might as well tell Uncle Sam to rest," said the sick man to himself. "Who is going to pay for the silk stockings if I rest?"

The doctor had come, the last one on his list of doctors, a young man from Washington, a nerve specialist. He had asked him quite seriously if he had had any hallucinations, seen things he could not quite account for, and Carter had answered somewhat grimly: "Silk stockings and French chops!" And the doctor, being a very knowing young man, had understood.

"You see, Mr. Carter, any one in your run-down nervous condition is apt to brood over fan-

cied troubles until it is not uncommon for him to be in a measure delirious. Now I am going to be quite frank with you, which is a course not usually pursued by nerve specialists but one I feel to be wisest. You have presumed on your strength and endurance for many years. Physically you have stood the test, but your nerves, which are in a way the mind or soul of the muscles and organs, have at last rebelled, and now you are going to have to submit to inactivity for at least a year——"

"A year! My God, man, you are crazy!"

"Yes, a year. Would not that be better than going to pieces completely and living on, a useless hulk? There, I thought that would make you sit up. Why should you not rest? What is eating you?"

Dr. Wright had a very brusque manner which was, indeed, in keeping with his appearance. He was a stalwart, broad-shouldered man, considerably under thirty. His face, rough-hewn but not heavy, was redeemed from plainness by the bluest blue eyes that were ever seen, with ex-

ceedingly long black lashes. His teeth were good but his rather long upper lip did not disclose the fact except on the rare occasions when he laughed. He had more control over his mouth than his eyes, as his eyes laughed continually whether he would or no. His brows were heavy and shaggy and he had a trick of pulling them down over his eyes as though he wanted to have his little laugh to himself, since those eyes would laugh. There was no laugh in his eyes now, but rather a stern kindness as he slangily invited the confidence of the older man, his patient.

"Eating me? Why, money, of course. I have absolutely nothing but what I earn,—and look at my family! They have always had everything I could give them and——"

"And now they must wake up and pay for their beds of ease," said the physician grimly. "Have you no property?"

"Well, I own the house we live in; at least I almost own it. If a shoemaker's children do go barefoot, an architect does build and own the

house he lives in," and the sick man managed to smile.

"That's good! Any other property?"

"I've a side of a mountain in Albemarle County. I took it for a bad debt from a country store-keeper—a kind of miser—but I believe I'd rather have the debt, as at least I had no taxes to pay on the debt."

Mr. Carter and Dr. Wright were alone during this conversation as Mrs. Carter had left the room to endeavor to compose herself. The little meadow brook had struck a rocky bed at last and its shallow waters were troubled. What was to become of her? Her Bob ill! Too ill to be worried about anything! And this beetled browed young doctor scared her with his intent gaze; there was no admiration or homge in it, only a scarcely veiled disapproval. She felt like a poor little canary with a great Tom-cat peering at her, scorning her as too insignificant even for a mouth-full. And how was it her fault that she was so useless? Was it the canary's fault that he had been born in a cage and some one took

care of him and he had never had to do like other birds and grub for his living? She was just about as capable of doing what this Dr. Wright expected of her as the canary would have been had he told the bird to come out of his cage and begin not only to grub worms for himself but for the kind person who had always fed him and maybe for the family as well.

"Mrs. Carter," said Dr. Wright, trying evidently not to be too stern as the little woman fluttered back into the room, a redness about her eyelids and a fresh sprinkling of powder on her pretty nose, "I want your husband to give you power of attorney so you can transact any business for him that is necessary——"

"Me? Oh, Dr. Wright, not me! I can't write a check and don't know how to do sums at all. Couldn't you do it?"

"Douglas will do," feebly muttered the invalid.

"Is Douglas your son?"

"Oh, no! She is our eldest daughter."

"It is strange how you Virginians, with the most womanly women I know of anywhere, are

constantly giving them masculine names. Shall I ask Miss Douglas to come to you?" Dr. Wright was evidently for early action and meant to push his point without more ado.

"Oh, Doctor, couldn't you see her first and tell her what it is you want? I don't quite understand."

"Yes, Mrs. Carter, if you wish it. And now I must ask you to keep your husband very quiet, no talking, no discussions, sleep, if he can get it, and very nourishing food. I will write out what I want him to eat and will ask you to see that he gets it and gets it on schedule time."

Poor little canary! The time has come for you to begin to grub!

CHAPTER II.

POWER OF ATTORNEY.

When Dr. Wright entered the library where the four girls were holding their consultation, he thought that without doubt they made a very charming group. But his soul was wroth within him at womenkind who could let a man like the one he had just left upstairs slave himself almost into insensibility that they might be gorgeously clothed and delicately fed. Silk stockings and lamb chops! Both very expensive luxuries! Well, they would learn their lesson young, which was a blessing. Rump steaks and bare feet or maybe cotton stockings and sandals would not be so hard on them as on the poor little weakling upstairs with her pretty eyes already reddened at the first breath of disaster.

The library at the Carters' home was a beautiful room with not one jarring note. Low bookshelves built into the walls were filled with

books in rich bindings. Costly rugs covered the floors. The walls were hung with signed etchings and rare prints. Ordinarily George Wright would have taken great pleasure in such a room, but now he only looked upon it as just so much more evidence of the selfishness of the females of the Carter family and the unremitting toil of the male.

He had not yet met any of the girls, but without hesitation he came forward, his step singularly light for one of his build. He spoke before Helen, whose back was towards the door, had even become aware of his presence. She gave a little gasp, sprang from the low ottoman, and faced the young physician, a spirit of antagonism showing from the first in her flashing eyes and sensitive nostrils. Helen had what Nan called "a speaking nose," and every emotion was shown as clearly by her nose as by some persons' eyes and others' mouths.

"I want to speak to Miss Douglas Carter; but since all of you are here, perhaps it might be just as well for me to speak to all of you." The last

part of his speech was made to Helen, whose attitude of defiance was unmistakable.

"I am Douglas," said the elder girl, rising and giving her hand graciously to the young man whose blue eyes showed no gleam of humour now and whose long upper lip was pulled down so far and so grimly that his perfect teeth could not do their part towards taking from the rugged homeliness of his face. "This is Helen, this Nan, and this Lucy."

The girls shook hands with him, all but Helen. She bowed, but as she bowed backwards, as it were, that is, jerked her chin up rather than down, it did not pass for courtesy.

"Won't you sit down?" asked Douglas.

"Well, yes,—I've got to talk to you girls like a Dutch uncle and I might just as well get down to it."

"I have an engagement," said Helen icily, consulting her tiny wrist watch, "so I will be excused."

"What time is your engagement?"

"Whenever I choose to keep it."

"Well, then I think you will choose to keep it a little later. I have one, too, but am going to spare a few minutes to talk about your father, and I think it best for all of you to be present."

Douglas drew Helen down beside her. The girl was trembling just like a young horse who has felt the first spur. Robert Carter had always said that Helen was the best child in the world just so long as she had her own way. Fortunately her own way was not a very wrong way as a rule, but if there were a clash of wills, good-by to the will that was not hers.

Who was this bushy-eyebrowed young Caliban who came there ordering her about? She would show him! But in the meantime Douglas had an arm around her and Caliban was talking.

"Your father is a very ill man and as his physician I feel compelled to have a very serious conversation with the family."

"Will he die?" whispered Lucy, all pertness gone from her young face.

"No, my dear, he will not die; but he may do worse than die unless he can be allowed to take

the rest that he should have been taking for years."

"What could be worse than death?" sobbed Nan.

"Uselessness! Chronic nervous prostration! His nerves have lost their elasticity and nothing will cure him but a long rest, absolutely free from care. Worries of all kinds, business, financial, family, every kind, must be kept from him. As I told your mother yesterday, a sea voyage would be the best thing for him, a long, lazy trip. When one gets on the water out of sight of land he kind of loses his identity in the immensity of Creation. That is what I want your father to do—lose his identity. Your mother must go with him to nurse him—he won't need much nursing, fortunately. And now you girls have got to decide among yourselves what is best to do. I know your financial affairs are none of my business——"

"Ahem——" from Helen.

"But I have to make your business my business for the time being on account of my patient.

Your father tells me he has absolutely no income except what he gets from his profession. You know that, I suppose?"

"Why no—that is—we——" hesitated Douglas. "Father never talked business with us."

"Um hum! I see! Just gave you ample allowances and let you spend 'em?"

"We have never had allowances," spoke Nan with her funny drawl. "Just made bills instead."

Dr. Wright flashed an amused look at the girl and for the first time they became aware of the fact that he had a very handsome set of teeth.

"Well, now, for a year I see nothing but for you to manage with very little and maybe not that. You own this house."

"Of course!" from the scornful Helen. "We can easily keep house here while our parents are away."

"But, Helen, keep house on what?" asked Douglas.

"Why, just keep house! Just go on living here."

"But when Father stops working, there is no more money. Can't you see?"

"Well, then, we will have to charge."

"Yes, charge on, and when your father gets well, if he does get well, he will have an accumulation of bills to meet which will be so good for his health, won't it?" The young man looked the scorn which he felt for Helen and addressed all of his remarks after that to Douglas, who listened attentively and gratefully. She well knew it was no pleasant task for him to plunge into their financial affairs, but he explained to her that it was important for his patient to leave town immediately if the change was to come in time, and that left no opportunity for them to consult the friends and relatives who would be the natural ones to go to in this predicament.

"Your mother wishes you to act in her stead and your father is to give you power of attorney so you can attend to any business for him. Can I trust you to get them ready, without bustle and confusion, by to-night? They can take the train to New York leaving here at eight.

They can take a boat to the Bermudas and Panama which sails to-morrow. I will go to New York with them and see that they get off safely."

"Oh, you are very kind," murmured Douglas.

"Not at all! I have business in New York, anyhow, and I know the surgeon on that particular boat, an old classmate of mine, and I want to put him on to your father's case. But now we come to the part you girls are to play. It is going to be pretty hard on you, but you are not to see your father before he goes. It would be exciting for him and I want him to avoid all excitement. Arrangements must be made and we must get him off quietly, without bustle. If he sees you, he will begin to question you about what you are going to do while he is away, and as you don't know yourselves, the old habit that is as much a part of the whole family as fingers and toes will assert itself, and the burden will fall on him, as usual, and I can assure you I will not answer for the consequences if one more ounce of worry is put on that tired brain. I am going to bring a notary public so he can give you, Miss Douglas,

power of attorney to transact any business for him. I am loath to bring even this matter to him, but that is necessary. As for what you are to do with yourselves after your parents leave, that is, of course, for you and your friends to decide. My province as a nerve specialist ends when I get my patient away, but begins again on his return, and if he comes back and finds debts waiting for him, I am pretty sure all the good of the voyage will be done away with. I think his mania is to keep out of debt. How he has managed to do it I can't see, but he tells me the bills are paid up to date. I am awfully sorry for all of you, but I am much sorrier for that fine, unselfish nature upstairs who has borne the heat of the burden absolutely unassisted until he has fallen under it."

"Oh, Dr. Wright! Don't! Don't!" wailed Douglas.

"Brute!" hissed Helen, but whether she meant the young doctor or Helen Carter she wasn't herself quite certain.

"Your mother——" he continued.

"Don't you dare to criticise our mother!" interrupted Helen.

"My dear young lady, I was merely going to remark that your mother seems to be absolutely necessary to the peace and happiness of your father, otherwise I would insist upon his going away alone. Often in these cases it is best for the patient to get entirely away from all members of his family, but I think she has a good effect on him. I must go now and get the notary public so you can enter into your office of vice regent. I'll also make arrangements for the railroad trip and long-distance my friend, the surgeon on the steamer. I'll be back in a jiffy," and Dr. Wright smiled very kindly at Douglas, whose young countenance seemed to have aged years in the last few minutes. "I am trusting you to keep the house quiet and get things in readiness without once appealing to your father."

"I'll do my best."

"That's all any one can do," and George Wright was grateful that there was one person in the house he could look to for sense and calm-

ness. He noted with added confidence that Douglas was very like her father in coloring and that the general shape of their features was similar. "I hope they won't manage to break her in two as they have him," he said to himself.

"We are going to help Douglas all we can," drawled Nan.

"Indeed we are!" exclaimed Lucy. Helen said nothing and did not acknowledge the bow that included her as the young doctor made his exit from the room.

Piercing shrieks came from the rear before the front door was reached!

"Give it to me! Give it to me! I ain't done makin' my puddin' an' it'll be ruint if you don't give it to me! Marmer! Marmer! Make 'em give it to me!"

A door noisily opened above and a rather sharp call descended from the court of appeals.

"What does he want? Whatever it is, give it to him!"

"But, Mis' Carter, he done been in de silber draw' and 'stracted de tea strainer an' dat new

fangled sparrowgrass flapper an' done took de bes' fluted bum bum dish fer tow mold his mud pies. I done tol' him not tow meddle in de mud no mo' fo' to-morrow as he is been washed an' dressed in his las' clean suit till de wash comes in. Jes' look at him! An' jes' listen tow him."

The irate old butler, Oscar, held by the hand the screaming, squirming Bobby. One could hardly help listening to him and it was equally hard to help looking at him. His beauty was almost unearthly: a slender little fellow of six, with dark brown hair that curled in spite of the barber's shears, the mouth of a cherub and eyes that were the envy of all his sisters—great dark eyes that when once you looked in them you were forced to give up any anger you might feel for him and just tumble head over heels in love with him. That is what Dr. Wright did. He just fell in love with him. Enraged for a moment by the noise that he was trying so hard to make the household feel must be kept from his patient, he started angrily down the hall toward the angelic culprit with a stern:

"Shhh! Your father is ill! You must stop that racket!" But one look in those eyes, and he changed his tactics. Taking the naughty child by his dirty little hand, he said: "Say, Bob, how would you like to come out with me in my car and help me? I've a lot of work to do and need some one to blow my horn for me and stick out an arm when we turn the corners."

"Bully! How much wages does you give?"

"A milk shake if you are good, and another kind if you are bad! Is it a go?"

"Sure!" And once more quiet reigned in the house. The upstairs door closed much more softly than it had opened, and Oscar cheerfully cleaned the silver that Bobby had left in such a mess.

CHAPTER III.

SILK STOCKINGS AND LAMB CHOPS.

"Well! What are we to do about it?" queried Nan as the front door closed on the doctor and their precious torment.

"Do? Do what has come to us to do as quickly as we can. I am going to see that mother's clothes are packed and father's, too. It does seem strange to be looking after his things. Oh, girls, just think how we have always let him do it himself! I can't remember even having darned a sock for him in all my life," and Douglas gave a little sob. "This is no time for bawling, though, I am going to let Dr. Wright see that I am not just a doll baby."

"Dr. Wright, indeed!" sniffed Helen. "Hateful, rude thing!"

"Why, Helen, I don't see why you need have it in for him. I think he was just splendid! But I can't wait to tell you what I think about him;

I must get busy." Douglas picked up her burden with very much her father's look and hastened off to do her young and inexperienced best.

"As for saying we can't see Father before he goes, it is nothing but his arbitrariness that dictates such nonsense," stormed Helen to the two younger girls. "He is just constituting himself boss of the whole Carter family. I intend to see Father and let him know how much I love him. I'd like to know how it would help any to have poor dear Daddy go off without once seeing his girls. Hasn't he always been seeing us and haven't we always taken all our troubles to him? How would we like it if he'd let us go on a trip and not come near to wish us *bon voyage?* You silly youngsters can be hoodwinked by this bumptious young doctor if you like, but I just bet you he can't control me! I've a great mind to go up to Father's room right this minute."

"If you go, I'm going, too," from Lucy.

"Neither one of you is going," said Nan quietly. "Helen, you are acting this way just be-

cause you are ashamed of yourself. You ought to be ashamed. I know I am so mortified I can hardly hold up my head. We have been actually criminal in our selfishness. I don't intend ever as long as I live to get a new dress or a new hat or a new anything, and when I do, I'm going to shop on the wrong side of Broad and get the very cheapest and plainest I can find."

"Nonsense! What does this ugly young man know of our affairs and what money Daddy has in the bank? I don't see that he is called on to tell us when we shall and shan't make bills. He is pretending that our own Father is crazy or something. Won't answer for the consequences! I reckon he won't. Why should he be right in his diagnosis any more than Dr. Davis or Dr. Drew or Dr. Slaughter or any of the rest of them? Nervous prostration! Why, that is a woman's disease. I bet Daddy will be good and mad when he finds out what this young idiot is giving him. How we will tease him!"

"But Dr. Wright is not an idiot and is not ugly and is doing the very best he can do. Do you

think he liked giving it to us so? Of course he didn't. I could see he just hated it. He would have let us alone except he sees we haven't a ray of sense among us, except maybe Douglas. She showed almost human intelligence."

"Speak for yourself, Miss Nan. Maybe you haven't any sense, but, thank you, I've got just as much as Douglas or that nasty old Dr. Wright or anybody else, in fact."

"Well, take in your sign then! You certainly are behaving like a nut now."

"And you? You think it shows sense to say that man is not ugly? Why, I could have done a better job on a face with a hatchet. He's got a mug like Stony Man, that big mountain up at Luray that looks like a man."

"That's just what I thought," said Nan, "and that is what I liked about him. He looked kind of like a rocky cliff and his eyes were like blue flowers, growing kind of high up, out of reach, but once he smiled at me and I knew they were not out of reach, really. When he smiled sure

enough and showed his beautiful white teeth, it made me think of the sun coming out suddenly on the mountain cliff."

"Well, Nan, if you can get some poetry out of this extremely commonplace young man you are a wonder. I am going down to see about my new hat, so I'll bid you good-by."

"If you are getting another new hat, I intend to have one, too!" clamored Lucy.

"Helen," said Douglas, coming back into the library. "Of course you are going to countermand the order for the hat that, after all, you do not really need."

"Countermand it! Why, please?"

"You heard what Dr. Wright said, surely. You must have taken in the seriousness of this business."

"Seriousness much! I heard a very bumptious young doctor holding forth on what is no doubt his first case, laying down the law to us as though he were kin to us about what we shall eat and wear!"

"Helen, you astonish me! I thought you

thought that you loved Father more than any of us."

"So I do! None of you could love him as much as I do. I love him so much that I do not intend to stand for this nonsense about his going off for months on a dirty old boat without ever even being allowed to hug his girls. I bet he won't let this creature boss him any more than I will. Daddy said I could have another hat just so I get a blue one. He doesn't think the one I got is becoming, either," and Helen flounced off up to her room.

"Douglas, what do you think is the matter with her? I have never seen Helen act like this before," said Nan anxiously.

"I think she is trying to shut her eyes to Father's condition. Helen never could stand anything being the matter with Father. You know she always did hate and despise doctors, too. Has ever since she was a little girl when they took out her tonsils. She seemed to think it was their fault. She will come to herself soon," and Douglas wiped off another one of the

tears that would keep coming no matter how hard she tried to hold them back.

Indeed, Helen was a puzzle to her sisters, and had they met her for the first time as you, my readers have, no doubt they would have formed the same opinion of her as you must have: a selfish, heartless, headstrong girl. Now Helen was in reality none of these terrible things, except headstrong. Thoughtless she was and spoiled, but generous to a fault, with a warm and loving heart. Her love for her father was intense and she simply would not see that he was ill. As Douglas said, she disliked and mistrusted all doctors. If the first and second and third were wrong in their diagnoses, why not the fourth? As for this absurd talk about money—what business was it of this young stranger to put his finger in their financial pie?

She shut her mind up tight and refused to understand what Dr. Wright had endeavored to explain to them, that there was no time to call in consultation their old friends and relatives. Besides, he wanted no excitement for the sick man,

no adieux from friends, no bustle or confusion. He just wanted to spirit his patient away and get him out of sight of land as fast as possible.

How could a perfect stranger understand her dear father better than she, his own daughter, did? Nervous prostration, indeed! Why, her father had nerves of steel. You could fire a pistol off right by his ear and he would not bat an eyelash! She worked herself up even to thinking that they were doing a foolish thing to allow this beetle-browed young man to carry off their mother and father, sending them to sea in a leaky boat, no doubt, with some plot for their destruction all hatched up with this ship's surgeon, this one time classmate.

"To be sure, he was nice to Bobby," she said to herself as she sat in her room, undecided whether to go get the new hat in spite of Douglas or perhaps twist the other one around so it would be more becoming. "That may be part of his deep laid scheme—to get the confidence of the child and maybe kidnap him.

"I'll give in about the hat, but I'll not give in

about seeing Daddy before he goes—I'm going to see him right this minute and find out for myself just how sick he is, and if he, too, is hypnotized into thinking this doctor man is any good. He shan't go away if he doesn't want to. Poor little Mumsy is too easy and confiding."

So Helen settled this matter to her own satisfaction, convincing herself that it was really her duty to go see her father and unearth the machinations of this scheming Dr. Wright, who was so disapproving of her. That really was where the shoe pinched with poor Helen: his disapproval. She was an extremely attractive girl and was accustomed to admiration and approval. Her youngest sister, Lucy, was about the only person of her acquaintance who found any real fault with her. Why, that young man seemed actually to scorn her! What reason had he to come pussy-footing into the library where she and her sisters were holding an intimate conversation, and all unannounced speak to them with his raucous voice so that she nearly jumped out of her skin? Come to think of it, though, his voice was

not really raucous, but rather pleasant and deep. Anyhow, he took her at a disadvantage from the beginning and sneered at her and bossed her, and she hated him and did not trust him one inch.

"Daddy, may I come in?"

Without knocking, Helen opened her father's door and ran into his room. He was lying on the sofa, covered with a heavy rug, although it was a very warm day in May. His eyes were closed and his countenance composed and for a moment the girl's heart stopped beating—could he be dead? He looked so worn and gaunt. Strange she had not noticed it before. She had only thought he was getting a little thin, but she hated fat men, anyhow, and gloried in her father's athletic leanness, as she put it. Most men of his age, forty-three, had a way of getting wide in the girth, but not her father. Forty-three! Why, this man lying there looked sixty-three! His face was so gray, his mouth so drawn.

Robert Carter opened his eyes and sighed wearily.

"Who is that?" rather querulously. "Oh, Helen! I must have been asleep. I dreamed I was out far away on the water. Just your mother and I, far, far away! It was rather jolly. Funny I was trying to add up about silk stockings and I made such a ridiculous mistake. You see there are five of you who wear silk stockings, not counting Bobby and me. I wasn't counting in socks. Five persons having two legs apiece makes ten legs—silk stockings cost one dollar apiece, no, a pair—fifty cents apiece—that makes five dollars for ten legs. Everybody has to put on a new pair every day, so that makes three hundred and sixty-five pairs a year, three hundred and sixty-six in leap year, seven hundred and thirty stockings—that makes one thousand, eight hundred and twenty-five dollars—thirty, in leap year—just for stockings. Seems preposterous, doesn't it? But here was my mistake, right here—people don't have to put on a new pair every day but just a clean pair, so I have to do my calculating all over. You can help me, honey. How many pairs of silk stockings does it take to

run one of you? You just say one, and I can compute the rest."

"Oh, Daddy, I don't know," and Helen burst out crying.

"Well, don't cry about it. It seems funny for stockings to make any one cry. Do you know, I've been crying about them, too? It is so confusing for people to have two legs and for leap year to have one more day, so some years people have to have more—maybe not have more, but change them oftener. I cry out of one eye about stockings, and the other sheds tears about French chops. I feel very much worried about French chops. It seems they sell them by the piece and not by the pound as they do loin chops—ten cents apiece, so the bills say. We usually get a dozen and a half for a meal—eighteen—that's a dozen and a half. Now there are seven of us and the four servants, that makes eleven, not quite a dozen. What I am worried about is that some of you don't get two chops apiece. I am wondering all the time which ones don't eat enough. There is nothing at all on one little French chop,

although I'm blessed if I could make one go down me now. But, honey, promise me if your mother and I do take this trip that this young man, whose name has escaped me, is going to arrange for us, that you will find out who it is among you who eats only one chop and make 'em eat more. I am afraid it is Nan and Bobby. They are more like your mother, and of course fairies don't really eat anything to speak of—but it must be of the best—always of the best. She has never known anything but luxury, and luxury she must have. What difference does it make to me? I love to work—but the days are too short. Take some off of the night then—six hours in bed is enough for any man. Edison says even that is too much. What's that young man's name? Well, whatever it is, I like him. He should have been an architect—I bet his foundations would have gone deep enough and the authorities would never have condemned one of his walls as unsafe. That's what they did to me, but it wasn't my fault—Shockoe Creek was the trouble—creeping up like a thief in the night and undermining my work."

As Robert Carter rambled on in this weird, disconnected way, the tears were streaming down his face and Helen, crouched on the floor by his side, was sobbing her heart out. Could this be her Daddy? This broken, garrulous man with the gray face and tears, womanish tears, flowing shamelessly from his tired eyes? Dr. Wright was right! Their father was a very ill man and one more ounce of care would be too much for his tired brain. Had she done him harm? Maybe her coming in had upset his reason, but she had not talked, only let him ramble on.

A car stopping at the door! The doctor and Bobby returning with the notary public! What must she do? Here she was in her father's room, disobeying the stern commands of the physician who could see with half his professional eye that she had harmed his patient. She had time to get out before the doctor could get upstairs—but no! not sneak!

"I may be a murderess and am a selfish, headstrong, bad, foolish, vain, extravagant wretch, but I am not a sneak and I will stay right here

and take the ragging that I deserve—and no doubt will get," remembering the lash that Dr. Wright had not spared.

The doctor entered the room very quietly, "Pussy-footing still," said Helen to herself. He gave her only a casual glance, seeming to feel no surprise at her presence, but went immediately to his patient, who smiled through his tears at this young man in whom he was putting his faith.

"I've been asleep, doctor, and thought I was out on the water. When Helen came in I awoke, but I was very glad for her to come in so she could promise me to look into a little matter of French chops that was worrying me. She and I have been having a little crying party about silk stockings. They seem to make her cry, too. Funny for me to cry. I have never cried in my life that I can remember, even when I got a licking as a boy."

"Crying is not so bad for some one who never has cried or had anything to cry for." Helen had a feeling maybe he meant it for her but he never looked at her. "And now, Mr. Carter, I

have a notary public downstairs and I am going to ask you to sign a paper giving to your daughter, Douglas, power of attorney in your absence. You get off to New York this evening and sail to-morrow."

"But, Dr. Whatsyourname, I can't leave until I attend to tickets and things," feebly protested the nervous man.

"Tickets bought; passage on steamer to Bermuda and Panama engaged; slow going steamer where you can lie on deck and loaf and loaf!"

"Tickets bought? I have never been anywhere in my life where I have not had to attend to everything myself. It sounds like my own funeral. I reckon kind friends will step in then and attend to the arrangements."

"Well, let's call this a wedding trip instead of a funeral. I will be your best man and you and your bride can spend your honeymoon on this vessel. The best man sometimes does attend to the tickets and in this case even decided where the honeymoon should be spent. I chose a Southern trip because I want you to be warm. Very

few persons go to Bermuda in May, but I feel sure you will be able to rest more if you don't have to move around to keep warm."

"Yes, that's fine, and Annette is from the extreme South and delights in warmth and sunlight. I feel sure you have done right and am just lying down like a baby and leaving everything to you," and Robert Carter closed his eyes, smiling feebly.

At a summons from the doctor, Douglas and the notary public entered the room. Helen, who had stayed to get the blowing up that she had expected from Dr. Wright, not having got it, still stayed just because she did not know how to leave. No one noticed her or paid the least attention to her except the notary, who bowed perfunctorily.

"This is the paper. You had better read it to see if it is right. It gives your daughter full power to act in your absence." Dr. Wright spoke slowly and gently and his voice never seemed to startle the sick man.

"Is Miss Carter of age?" asked the notary.

"Otherwise she would have some trouble in any legal matter that might arise."

"Of age! No! I am only eighteen."

"I never thought of that," said Mr. Carter.

"Nor I, fool that I am," muttered the young physician.

"Oh, well, let me make you her guardian, or better still, give you power of attorney," suggested Mr. Carter.

"Me, oh, I never bargained for that!" The patient feebly began to weep at this obstacle. You never can tell what is going to upset a nervous prostrate. "Well, all right. I can do it if it is up to me," the doctor muttered. "Put my name in where we have Miss Carter's," he said to the notary. "George Wright is my name."

"I'm so glad to know your name; that is one of the things that has been worrying me," said the patient, as he signed his name and the notary affixed his seal after the oaths were duly taken.

CHAPTER IV.

GONE!

"I am waiting, Dr. Wright," said Helen, after the notary public had taken his departure and Douglas had gone to put finishing touches to the very rapid packing of steamer trunks, Mrs. Carter helping in her pathetically inefficient way. Helen stood at the top of the stairs to intercept the doctor as he left the patient's room.

"Waiting for what?"

"For you to tell me you were astonished to find me in my father's room when you had given express orders that none of us were to see him."

"But I was not astonished."

"Oh, you expected to find me?"

"I did not know whether I should find you, but I knew very well you would go there."

"So you thought I would sneak in and sneak out?"

"I did not call it sneaking but I was pretty sure

you had no confidence in me and would do your own sweet will. I hope you are satisfied now that it was best not to excite your father."

"But I did not excite him. He just talked in that terrible way himself. You are cruel to say I made him worse!"

"But I did not say so. Certainly, however, you made him no better. He said himself he waked when you came in and you did not deny it. Of course, sleep is always 'kind Nature's sweet restorer.' If you will let me pass, I will now go to see Miss Douglas about ordering your car for the train this evening. We have only about an hour's time and there is still a great deal to do. There is the expressman now for the trunks."

"Can't even trust me to order the chauffeur to have the car at the door," cried Helen bitterly to herself as the doctor went past her. "I am of no use to any one in the whole world and I wish I were dead."

The look of agony in the girl's face made an impression on the young man in spite of the

He went up the steps again, two at a time—*Page* 55

strong resentment he felt toward her. He was somewhat like Helen in that he was not accustomed to disapproval, and being flouted by this schoolgirl was not a pleasant morsel to swallow. He felt sure of his diagnosis of Mr. Carter's case, for, having served for several years as head assistant in a large sanitarium in New York, he was well acquainted with the symptoms of nervous prostration. Of course, his sending the patient on a sea voyage instead of placing him in a sanitarium was somewhat of a risk, but he felt it was the best thing to do, reading the man's character as he had.

Helen's scorn and doubt of him and her seeming selfishness had certainly done little to recommend her in his eyes, but gentleness and sympathy were the strongest points in George Wright's make-up, and as he went by the girl he could read in her face agony, extreme agony and desperation. He went up the steps again, two at a time, and said gently:

"Miss Helen, would you be so kind as to see about the car for me? Order it for 7.45. I am

going to put them on at the downtown station and get them all installed in the drawing-room with the door shut so they need not see all the Richmond people who are sure to be taking this night train to New York and getting on at Elba, the uptown stop."

"Yes—and thank you."

"By Jove," thought the young man, "that girl is some looker! If she had the sense of her sister Douglas, I believe she would be pretty nice, too."

Helen's whole countenance had changed. From the proud, scornful girl, she had turned again into her own self, the Helen her sisters knew and loved.

"You might see that Bobby is kept kind of quiet, too. Tell him I will take him out with me again soon and let him blow my horn and poke out his arm when we turn the corners, if he will be quiet for an hour."

"All right," said Helen meekly, wondering at her own docility in so calmly being bossed by this person whom she still meant to despise. She inter-

viewed the chauffeur, ordering the car at the proposed time, and then captured Bobby, who was making his way to his father's room. She inveigled him into the back yard where she kept him in a state of bliss, having her supper out there with him and playing tea party to his heart's content, even pretending to eat his wonderful mud "pies an' puddin's."

It was almost time for the dread departure and still she kept watch over Bobby. The mother came out in the back yard to kiss her children good-by. Poor little mother! The meadow brook has surely come on rocky places now. What effect is it to have? Perhaps the channel will be broadened and deepened when the shoals are past. Who knows?

Gone, at last! No one even to wave farewell, so implicitly did the Carter household obey the stern mandates of the doctor. Even the negro servants kept in the background while their beloved master and mistress were borne away by the smoothly rolling car.

"Seems mos' lak a funeral," sobbed Oscar, "lak

a funeral in yellow feber times down in Mobile, whar I libed onct. Nobody went to them funerals fer fear er ketching sompen from de corpse. Saddes' funerals ebber I seed."

The girls were sure those funerals could not have been any sadder than this going away of their parents. Once more they gathered in the library, as forlorn a family as one could find in the whole world, they were sure. Their eyes were red and their noses redder. Douglas had had the brunt of the labor in getting the packing done and had held out wonderfully until it was all over, and now she had fallen in a little heap on the sofa and was sobbing her soul out.

Nan was doing her best to comfort her while Lucy was bawling like a baby on Helen's shoulder, truce between the two declared for the time being.

"I feel just like the British would if the Rock of Gibraltar had turned into brown sugar and melted into the sea," declared Helen, when the storm had blown itself out and a calmness of despair had settled down on all of them.

"That's just it," agreed Nan. "Father has always been just like Gibraltar to us. His picture would have done just as well for the Prudential Life Insurance ad as Gibraltar did."

"If you could just have heard him talk as he did to me. Oh, girls, I feel as though I had killed him!" and Helen gave a dry sob that made Lucy put an arm around her. "I have sworn a solemn swear to myself: I am not going to wear a single silk stocking nor yet a pair of them until Father comes home, and not then unless he is well. I have some old cotton ones that I got for the Camp-Fire Girls' hike, the only ones I ever had since I can remember, and I am going to wear those until I can get some more. I hate 'em, too! They make my toes feel like old rusty potatoes in a bag."

This made the girls laugh. A laugh made them feel better. Maybe behind the clouds the sun was, after all, still shining and they would not have to wear rubbers and raincoats forever.

"You remind me of the old man we saw up at

Wytheville who had such very long whiskers, having sworn never to cut them off or trim them until the Democrats elected a President," drawled Nan. "Those whiskers did some growing between Cleveland's and Wilson's Administrations. You remember when Wilson was elected and he shaved them off, his wife made a big sofa cushion out of them; and the old man had become so used to the great weight on his chin, that now he was freed from it, his chin just naturally flew up in the air and made him look like his check rein was too tight."

"Yes, I remember," declared Lucy; "and his wife said she was going to strap the cushion back on where his whiskers used to be if he didn't stop holding his head so haughty." Another laugh and the sun came out in their hearts.

Dr. Wright had assured them that their father would be well. He had had many patients who had been in much worse condition who were now perfectly well. Mr. Carter's case had been taken hold of in time and the doctor was trusting to his splendid constitution and the quiet of the ocean

to work wonders in him. In the meantime, it was necessary for the girls to begin to think about what they were to do.

"I think we had better not try to come to any conclusion to-night," said Douglas, "we are all of us so worn out, at least I am. We will sleep on it and then to-morrow get together and all try to bring some plan and idea. There was almost no money left in the bank after the tickets for the voyage were bought and money put in Mother's bag for incidentals."

"Poor little Muddy, just think of her having to be the purse bearer! I don't believe she knows fifty cents from a quarter," sighed Nan.

"Well, Mother will have to go to school just like the rest of us. I fancy we only know the difference in size and not much about the value of either. Dr. Wright wrote a check for the amount in bank, showing from Father's check book, and after he had paid for the tickets, he left the rest for me to put to my account. I am awfully mortified, but I don't know how to de-

posit money—and as for writing a check—I'd sooner write a thesis on French history. I know I could do it better."

Douglas smothered a little sigh. This was no time to think of self or to repine about her private ambitions, but somehow the thought would creep in that this meant good-by to college for her. She had planned to take examinations for Bryn Mawr early in June and was confident of passing. She had her father's ability to stick to a thing until it was accomplished, and no matter how distasteful a subject was to her, she mastered it. This was her graduating year at school. Now all joy of the approaching commencement was gone. She was sorry that her dress was already bought, and in looking over the check book, she had found it was paid for, too. Forty dollars for one dress and that of material that had at the best but little wearing quality! Beautiful, of course, but when a family had been spending money as freely as this family had always done, what business had one of them with a forty dollar white dress with no wear to it when

the balance in the bank showed only eighty-three dollars and fifty-nine cents?

A sharp ringing of the front door bell interrupted Douglas's musings and made all of the sisters conscious of their red eyes and noses.

"Who under Heaven? It is nine o'clock!"

"Cousin Lizzie Somerville, of course. She always rings like the house was on fire."

It was Miss Elizabeth Somerville, a second cousin of their father. She came into the library in rather unseemly haste for one of her usual dignity.

"Where is your father?" she demanded, without the ceremony of greeting the girls. "I must see him immediately. Your mother, too, of course, if she wants to come down, but I must see your father."

"But he is gone!"

"Gone where? When will he return?"

"In about two months," said Helen coolly. Helen was especially gifted in tackling Cousin Lizzie, who was of an overbearing nature that

needed handling. "He and Mother have gone to Bermuda."

"Bermuda in the summer! Nonsense! Tell me when I can see him, as it is of the greatest importance. I should think you could see that I am in trouble and not stand there teasing me," and since it was to be a day of tears, Cousin Lizzie burst out crying, too.

"Oh, Cousin Lizzie, I am so sorry! I did not mean to tease. I am not teasing. Father is ill, you must have noticed how knocked up he has been looking lately, and the doctor has taken him with Mother to New York. They have just gone, and they are to sail on a slow steamer to Bermuda and Panama in the morning. Please let us help you if we can."

"You help! A lot of silly girls! It is about my nephew Lewis!" and the poor lady wept anew.

CHAPTER V.

LEWIS SOMERVILLE.

"Lewis! What on earth can be the matter with him?" chorused the girls.

"Matter enough! He has been shipped!"

"Shipped? Oh, Cousin Lizzie, you can't mean it!" exclaimed Douglas, drying her eyes as she began to realize that she was not the only miserable person in the world whose ambitions had gone awry.

"I am sure if he has been fired, it is from no fault of his own," declared Nan, who was a loyal soul and always insisted that her friends and relatives were in the right until absolute proof to the contrary was established.

"Well, whether it was his fault or not, I am not prepared to say. 'Where there is so much smoke there must be some fire.'"

The girls had to smile at this, as there was

never a time when Cousin Lizzie did not have a proverb ready to suit the occasion.

"Yes, but the fire might not have been of his kindling," insisted Nan.

"Please tell us what the trouble is, Cousin Lizzie, if you don't mind talking about it," begged Douglas. "Has Lewis really left West Point for good? I can't believe it."

"The trouble is: 'Evil communications corrupt good manners.' If Lewis had not been with the companions that he has chosen, he would not have gotten into this trouble. Surely Solomon was wise indeed when he said: 'Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son, but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father.' I am glad my poor brother is dead and not here to witness his son's disgrace."

"Cousin Lizzie, I do not believe that Lewis has done anything disgraceful," insisted Nan, speaking almost quickly for once.

"Well, it is a disgrace in my mind for the son and grandson of Confederate soldiers to be dismissed from a Yankee institution, whether he

was in fault or not. 'As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.' A Somerville's place is in the South and it was always against my wishes that Lewis went to West Point."

"Please tell us what the trouble is, what Lewis did or didn't do at West Point," said Helen in the determined voice that usually made Cousin Lizzie stop her proverbs long enough to give the information required.

" 'Hazing a plebe,' is what he said. What a plebe is or what hazing is I do not know, but whatever it is, Lewis says he was not mixed up in it, but he, with eight other second classmen, were let out. The words are his, not mine. All I know is that he was discharged and is at my house now in a state of dejection bordering on insanity."

"Poor boy! We are so sorry for him. What is he going to do now?" asked Douglas.

Here was another disappointment for Douglas. Her cousin, Lewis Somerville, was one of the dearest friends she had in the world. He was

two years her senior and had made it his business since they were tiny tots to protect her and look after her on all occasions. They had had a plan for the following year that now, of course, had fallen through. She was to have come to West Point from Bryn Mawr to the finals. He would then have been a third classman and able to make her have a rip-roaring time, as he had expressed it.

Lewis in a state of dejection bordering on insanity! That was unbelievable. If there ever was a gayer, happier person than Lewis, she had never seen him.

"Do? Goodness knows!"

"Well, all I can say," put in Nan, "is that Uncle Sam is a fool not to know that Lewis is a born soldier, and if he wants to prepare himself to defend his country, he should be allowed to do so. Oh, I don't care what he has done—I just know he hasn't done it!"

"I'm going to 'phone him this minute and tell him to come around here!" and Helen jumped up from her seat, thereby waking Lucy, who had

dropped asleep on her shoulder, worn out with the stress of emotion.

"If you are, so am I—whatever it is," declared Lucy, rubbing her eyes, as determined as ever to keep up with Helen or die in the attempt.

"Hello! is this you, Lewis?" as the connection was quickly made.

"Well," in a tired, dreary voice. "What is it?"

"This is me, Lewis, Helen Carter! We are all sitting up here dressed in our best waiting for you to come to see us. Douglas says if you don't hurry she, for one, is going to bed."

"What's that?" in a little brisker tone.

"Say, Lewis, we are in an awful lot of trouble. You know Father is ill and has had to go away and we don't know what is to become of us. We need your advice terribly——"

"Be 'round in a jiffy," and so he was.

"That was very tactful of you, Helen," said Cousin Lizzie lugubriously. "You know 'Misery loves company.'" But a peal from the front door bell interrupted further quotations and

Lewis Somerville came tearing into the house in answer to Helen's S. O. S.

He did look as dejected as one of his make-up could. It is hard to be dejected very long when one is just twenty, in perfect health, with naturally high spirits and the strength to remove mountains tingling in the veins. A jury of women could not have shipped the young would-be soldier, and it must have taken very hard-hearted men, very determined on maintaining discipline, deliberately to have cut this young fellow's career in two. Our army must be full of very fine young men if they can so lightly give up such a specimen as this Lewis Somerville. Imagine a young giant of noble proportions, as erect as an ash sapling that has had all the needed room in which to grow, a head like Antinous and frank blue eyes that could no more have harbored a lie than that well-cut, honest mouth could have spoken one.

"I didn't do it and just to let me know that you don't believe I did, you have got to kiss me all around."

"Nonsense, Lewis! Helen and I are too old to kiss you even if you are a cousin," and Douglas got behind Cousin Lizzie.

"Quite right, Douglas, 'The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge.' Lewis is not such very close kin, besides."

"Why, Aunt Lizzie, I did not expect you to desert me."

" 'It is not good to eat much honey, so for men to search their own glory is not glory.' "

"Well, Nan and Lucy will kiss me, anyhow. They believe I did not do it."

"We are sure you are telling the truth," said Douglas gravely. "We do not know yet what they say you did."

"They say I helped a lot of fellows tie a plebe to a tree and drop ice down his back, making out it was red hot pennies, until the fellow fainted from his fancied injuries. I never did it, but if I had, it wouldn't have been a patching on the things the second classmen did to me last year when I was a plebe, and wild horses would not have dragged a complaint from me. It was done

by some men who are my chums, but I declare I was not with the crowd."

"We know it! we know it!" from all the girls.

"But I don't want to talk about myself—I am so anxious to hear what is the matter with Cousin Robert. Let's let up on me and talk about your trouble, and if I can help, please command me."

"Father is very ill," said Douglas soberly. "He has been working too hard for a long time and now his nerves have just given way and he has had to stop and go on a trip. Dr. Wright assures us that he has stopped in time and a sea trip and a year's rest will completely restore him. It has come on us so suddenly that we have not had time to catch our breath even."

"And who is this Dr. Wright?" asked Cousin Lizzie. "I thought Dr. Davis was your family physician. Some Yankee, I'll be bound, with all kinds of new notions."

"He is from Washington recently, but I believe he came originally from New York State."

"Do you mean that you let a perfect stranger

pick up your parents and send them off on a journey without consulting a soul?"

"But it was important to avoid all confusion and discussion. Dr. Wright has been lovely about it all. He even got a notary public so I could be given power of attorney to attend to any business that might come up. It so happened, though, that my being under age was a drawback and Father gave him power of attorney instead."

"Douglas Carter! Do you mean to say that a strange young Yankee doctor that has only been living in Richmond a little while has the full power to sell your father out and do anything he chooses with his estate? Preposterous!"

"But there isn't any estate," objected Douglas, and Helen could not help a little gleam of satisfaction creeping into her eyes. She was not the only person who felt that Dr. Wright had been, to say the least, presumptuous.

"No estate! Why I thought Robert Carter was very well off. What has he done with his money, please?"

"We have just lived on it. We didn't know," sadly from Douglas.

"I never heard of such extravagance. 'A fool and his money are soon parted.' "

"We have got just exactly eighty-three dollars and fifty-nine cents in the bank. Father owns this house and a side of a mountain in Albemarle, and that is all."

"Mercy, child! I can't believe it."

"We have got to live somehow, and I believe we all feel that it would be very bad for Father to come back and find debts to be paid off. He has such a horror of debt that he has always paid the bills each month. What do you think we could do—something to make money, I mean? Father was in such a nervous state we could not consult him, and Mother, poor little Mother, of course she does not understand business at all."

"Humph! I should say not! And what do you chits of girls know about it, either? Are you meaning to stay alone, all un-chaperoned, until this Yankee doctor thinks it is time to let your parents return? Just as like as not there is noth-

ing the matter with your father but a touch of malaria."

"We had not thought of a chaperone, as we have been so miserable about Father we could not think of ourselves. If we are going to make a living, we won't need chaperones, anyhow."

"Make a living, indeed! You are to stay right here in your home and I will come stay with you, and you can curtail your expenses somewhat by dismissing one servant and giving up your car. Robert Carter is not the kind of man who would want his eighteen-year-old daughter and others even younger to go out into the world to make a living. He would rather die than have such a thing happen."

"But we are not going to have him die," broke in Helen. "I thought just as you do, Cousin Lizzie, until I saw him this afternoon and realized how worried he has been. We are going to do something and there are to be no debts awaiting him, either. What do you think of boarders? Do you think we could get any?"

"Who on earth would board with us, here in

Richmond? Everybody knows what a trifling lot we are. If we have boarders, it will have to be on the side of the mountain in Albemarle," said Nan, and as usual every one stopped to hear what she had to say. "Besides, a boarding house in summer shuts up shop in cities. Country board is the thing. Let's rent our house furnished for a year and go to the mountains."

"But there are nothing but trees and rocks on the side of the mountain in Albemarle," objected Douglas; "not a piece of a house except a log cabin near the top built by the sick Englishman who used to live there."

"No room for boarders in that, I know, as Father pointed it out to me once from the train when we were on our way to Wytheville. It had one room and maybe two. It must command a wonderful view. You could see it for miles and miles and when you get up there, there is no telling what you can see. It would make a great camp—Girls! Girls! Cousin Lizzie! Lewis! All of you! I've got a scheme! It just came to me!" and Helen jumped up and ran around and hugged

everybody, even the cousin she and Douglas had grown too big to kiss.

"Well, cough it up! We are just as anxious as can be to share your idea, or is it so big it got stuck on the way," laughed Lewis, accepting the caress as it was meant.

"Let's have a boarding camp, with Cousin Lizzie to chaperone us! I know just lots of girls who would simply die to go, and Albemarle is close enough for week-enders to pour in on us."

"Hurrah! Hurrah! And I bid to be man-of-all work! I know rafts of fellows who would want to come."

"Yes, and let's call it Week End Camp," said Nan. "Week to be spelled W-E-A-K. What do you think of the plan, Cousin Lizzie? If you are to be chaperone, it seems to me you should be consulted the first thing."

"Don't ask me, child. Things are moving too rapidly for me. We must go a little more slowly," and truly the old lady did look dazed indeed. " 'More haste, less speed,' is a very good adage."

"Well, Cousin Lizzie, it does sound crazy in a way, but do you know, I believe we could really do it and do it very well," said Douglas. "I consider Helen a genius to have thought of such a thing. I don't think the outlay need be very great, and surely the living would be cheap when once we get there."

"But, my dear, at my age I could not begin to eat out of doors. I have not done such a thing since I can remember but once, and then I went with the United Daughters of the Confederacy on a picnic. The undertaker went ahead with chairs and tables so everything was done in decency and order.

Nan's "Funeral baked meats!" made them all laugh, even Cousin Lizzie.

"I am going to have a short khaki suit with leggins coming way up," declared Helen, who could not contemplate anything without seeing herself dressed to suit the occasion.

"Me, too," sleepily from Lucy, who was trying to keep awake long enough to find out what it all meant.

"Aunt Lizzie, I wish you would consent. It all depends on you. You could eat in the cabin and sleep in the cabin and not camp out at all. I could go up right away and build the camp. I'd just love to have something to do. Bill Tinsley, from Charlottesville, got shipped with me and I'm pretty sure he'd join me. You'd like Bill, he's so quaint. We are both of us great carpenters and could make a peach of a job of it. Do, please, Aunt Lizzie!"

Could this be the young man who, only ten minutes ago, she had described as being in a state of dejection bordering on insanity? This enthusiastic boy with his eyes dancing in joyful anticipation of manual labor to be plunged into? If she consented to go to the mountains, thereby no doubt making herself very uncomfortable, she might save her beloved nephew from doing the thing that she was dreading more than all others, dreading it so much that she had been afraid to give voice to it: going to France to fight with the Allies.

"Well, Lewis, if this plan means that you will

find occupation and happiness, I will consent. I can't bear to think of your being idle. 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.' "

"Oh, Cousin Lizzie, I think you are just splendid!" exclaimed Helen.

And, indeed, Miss Elizabeth Somerville was splendid in her way. She was offering herself on the altar of aunthood. It was a real sacrifice for her to consent to this wild plan of going to the mountains. She hated snakes, and while she did not confess that she hated Nature, she certainly had no love for her. Her summer outings had meant, heretofore, comfortable hotels at the springs or seashore, where bridge was the rule and Nature the exception. The promise of being allowed to sleep in the cabin and even eat in it was not any great inducement. A log cabin, built and lived in and finally, no doubt, died in, by a sick Englishman was not very pleasant to contemplate. Miss Lizzie was very old-fashioned in all her ideas with the exception of germs, and she was very up-to-date as to them. No modern scientist knew more about them or believed in them

more implicitly. Oh, well! She could take along plenty of C. N. and sulphur candles and crude carbolic. That would kill the germs. She would find out the latest cure for snake bite, and with a pack of cards for solitaire perhaps she could drag out an existence until Robert Carter and Annette got home from this mad trip. All she hoped was that nobody would wake her up to see the sun rise and that she would not be called on to admire the moon every time there was a moon.

"I hope we can get the daily paper," she moaned feebly. "I hate to go too far from the daily paper."

"We'll get it if I have to build a flying machine and fly to Richmond for it," declared Lewis.

"The place is not half a mile from the post office," said Helen. "At least, that is the way it looks from the train. When can we get started? I don't think it is worth while to go back to school any more. We can all of us just stop."

"Oh, Helen, of course we can't! Douglas is going to graduate, and Lucy and I have our exams next week. What would Father say at our

giving up right now? You can quiturate all you've a mind to, but I intend to go on and graduate and go to college like Douglas," said Nan.

"I am afraid I'll have to give up college, but I am going to take my Bryn Mawr examinations just the same because I want Father to know I can stand them." Douglas hoped sincerely that the tear she felt gathering would evaporate before it dropped.

"Give up college! Why, Douglas Carter, I don't see what you mean. You have been full of it all winter," exclaimed Helen.

"But Helen, you know perfectly well there is no more money."

"Oh, I keep on forgetting!"

"There is one thing that I have forgotten, too, and I feel awfully bad about it after all his kindness," said Douglas. "That is, we must make no decided plans until we consult Dr. Wright."

"Consult Dr. Wright, indeed! I'd like to know what's it to him," said Helen wrathfully. "Can't we even go on a summer trip without asking his permission?"

"Well, I think inasmuch as he has power of attorney and we can't do anything without money that we shall have to consult him. He'll be home to-morrow night and we can ask him immediately. I am pretty sure he will think it a good thing, though."

"Maybe, but for goodness' sake, don't tell him it was my idea originally, as he hates me as much as I hate him, and if *he* had thought of it, I just know I'd never have consented or thought it a good plan."

"Well, I know one thing," said Miss Somerville, "I am dead tired and this child here is asleep. We had better go to bed and get all the rest we can if we are going to camp out for the summer."

How different the night was from what the Carters had looked forward to! Sleepless misery was what they had been sure would be their lot, and instead, they went to their beds with their heads full of their week-end boarding camp. Father was to get well on his voyage and come back to join them in Albemarle. Instead of find-

ing debts piled on debts, their camp was to pay and he was to find his girls actually making a living.

"Cotton stockings will be the appropriate things to wear at camp," was the last thought Helen had. "I don't see how I could spend the summer in town after the oath I have taken. I couldn't show my face, or rather my feet, on the street."

CHAPTER VI.

THE RECONSTRUCTION.

"Helen, I actually slept all night."

"So did I. If any one had told me I could sleep a wink, I would have been furious. I wish we could hear from Father. You saw Cousin Lizzie felt just exactly as I did about that Dr. Wright. He may be all right and he may be all wrong. If he is all wrong, couldn't he make us dance, though? He could sell us out, lock, stock and barrel, pocket the proceeds and skidoo."

"Oh, Helen, how can you even give such a horrid idea a moment's lodgement in your mind? Dr. Wright is as good as he looks, I am sure. He certainly looks kind and honest."

"Well, he ought to be honest he is so ugly."

The girls were still in bed, which they had shared ever since they had been promoted from cradles. It was Saturday morning and the day before had been the one of trial.

"Father likes him a lot and trusts him."

"Ye—s, I know—but then, you see——"

"Yes, I see he is a very fine young man who thought, and quite rightly, that we had been blindly selfish and heartless to let Father work so hard; and he let us know what he thought of us and it got your goat."

"Is that the way you are going to express yourself in your B. M. exams? Because if it is, you will win a scholarship surely."

"If I only could! . . . Come in!" in answer to a knock at the door.

"Telegraph fer you, Miss Douglas. I hope an' trus' 'tain't no bad news 'bout yo' maw and paw," said the housemaid, bringing in a dreaded yellow envelope. "Uncle Oscar, he dreamed 'bout aigs las' night an' they was whole an' entire, an' all de dream books say dat it is a sho' sign an' symbol er trouble. De trouble is in de shell an' time alone will hatch it out."

"Well, this is good news, Susan," laughed Douglas as she quickly scanned the message: "'Your father and mother slept well and are

now enjoying breakfast at Pennsylvania Station. Will see you this evening. George Wright.' "

"Well, Glory be! It can't be Mr. Carter what the bad luck is layin' fer. I 'low it is dat lo' down nigger Jim, Uncle Oscar's sister's step-son, what got stuck in de lonesome ribs by a frien' at meetin' las' Sunday with one er these here unsafety razors," and Susan took herself off to give out in the kitchen that no doubt Jim was going to die, since Mr. Carter was improving.

"Now, Helen, don't you think Dr. Wright is very thoughtful? You just said you wished we could hear from Father."

"He does seem to think of lots of things. I couldn't help admiring him for the way he got the drawing room for them and put them on the train at the downtown station to keep them from having to see so many people. That night train is always full of people we know and they all of them get on at Elba. I bet you he got his telegram in ten words, though. I know he is economical and would die rather than spill over. Let

me see it. Humph! Nineteen words. I wonder he didn't send it collect."

"Oh, Helen! How can you be so hard on the poor young man? I believe you are just pretending to hate him so. I am glad it is Saturday and no school. I think we had better go see real estate agents the first thing this morning and try to rent our house furnished for the summer. I am pretty sure Dr. Wright would approve of that. And also see about selling the car."

"Selling the car! Why, Douglas, how on earth will we do without it?"

"Of course we must sell it. Helen Carter, I actually believe you think that if you give up wearing silk stockings for a year we can live on your resolution. Do you realize that the cash we have in bank would just about pay the chauffeur and keep us in gasoline for a month?"

"Oh, I am such a dunce! I am afraid my being poor has a kind of musical comedy effect in my mind so far. What are you going to do with me, Douglas?"

"Nothing, honey, but you must not get angry

with me when I call you down about money. I feel so responsible somehow."

"Angry with you! Why, I think you are just splendid, and I am going to be so careful I just know you will never have to call me down."

Douglas smiled, knowing very well that Helen and economy were not meant to dwell together.

"There is only one thing I am going to make all of you promise, that is NOT TO CHARGE," with great emphasis.

"Oh, of course not after we get started, but how are we to get our outfits for the mountains? Our khaki skirts and leggins and things that are appropriate? And then the cotton stockings that I have sworn to wear until Father is well! I have to have a new set of them. Ugh! how I hate 'em!"

"But, Helen, we have our Camp-Fire outfits that are thoroughly suitable for what we are going to do. There are loads of middy blouses in the house, so I am sure we need buy no more of them. As for stockings—it seems to me you had

better wear out what stockings you have, even if they are silk, before you buy any more."

"Never! You don't seem to understand the significance of my oath. When a pilgrim of old swore to put on sackcloth and travel to some distant shrine, he didn't say he would not go to the expense of sackcloth since he had plenty of velvet suits on hand, did he now? No! He went and bought some sackcloth if he didn't happen to have any in the house and gave his velvet suits to the poor or had his hand-maidens pack them up in frankincense and myrrh or something until he got back——"

"All right! All right! But please don't give away anything to the poor. If Cousin Lizzie should hear of your doing such a thing she would certainly say: 'Charity begins at home.' "

"I won't give them away if you think I shouldn't, but I'd like to put temptation out of my reach. I hope we can get off to the mountains real soon as I am sure I have no desire to flaunt my penance in the face of the Richmond public. Don't you think, Douglas, that I might have the

fifty-nine cents that is in the bank so things will balance better, and with fifty-nine cents I can get three pair of sixteen-and-two-third-cent stockings? I'll bring back the nine cents change." Helen was quite solemn in her request, but Douglas was forced to laugh at her lugubrious countenance.

"Yes, dear, if you really feel so strongly about the cotton stockings. Haven't you any money at all in your purse? I have a little, I believe."

"Well, I never thought of that! Sure I have!" and Helen sprang out of bed, where they were still lolling while the above conversation was going on, and hunted wildly in a very much mussed drawer for her silver mesh bag. "Hurrah! Three paper dollars and a pile of chicken feed silver! I can get cotton stockings for a centipede with that much money."

It was a very pretty room that Douglas and Helen Carter shared. Robert Carter had brought to bear all the experience he had gained in building other persons' houses to make his own house perfect. It was not a very large house but

every detail had been thought out so not one brick was amiss. Convenience and Beauty were not sacrificed to one another but went hand in hand. The girls loved their room with its dainty pink paper and egg-shell paint. They had not been in the house long enough for the novelty to wear off, as it was only about a year old. As Douglas lay in her luxurious bed while Helen, being up in search of money, took first bath, she thought of the bitterness of having strangers occupy their room. How often she had lain in that soft, comfortable nest and fancied that it must be like the heart of a pink rose. And the charming private bath-room must be given up, too.

She could hear Helen splashing away, evidently enjoying her morning shower as she was singing with many trills and folderols, trying seemingly to hear herself above the noise of the running water.

"Poor Helen!" thought Douglas. "It is harder, somehow, for her than any of us. Lucy is young enough to learn the new trick of being poor very easily, and Nan is such a philosopher; and dear

little Bobby won't see the difference just so he can have plenty of mud to play in; and I—oh, well—I have got so much to do I can't think about myself —I must get up and do it, too. Here I am selfishly lying in bed when I know Nan and Lucy want to hear the news from Father just as much as I did." So, slipping on a kimono, she ran into the room across the hall, shared by the two younger girls.

They were up and almost dressed. "Lucy and I thought maybe we could help, so we hurried. I know you've lots to do," said Nan.

"That was dear of you both. Of course we won't have so much to do right now, as we have to wait for Dr. Wright to come home; and then if we can rent the house furnished, we must get everything in order. But first listen to the good news!" and she read the telegram.

"Isn't that splendid and wasn't it kind of Dr. Wright to send it to you?"

"I think so. If only Helen would not feel so unkindly to him! She utterly refuses to like him," and Douglas sighed.

"I don't intend to like him either, then!" exclaimed Lucy. "He shan't boss me if he isn't going to boss Helen."

"How absurd you are," laughed Nan. "You are so afraid that Helen will get something you don't have that you won't even let her have a private little dislike without wanting to have some, too. I bet if Helen got the smallpox you would think yourself abused if you didn't get it, too."

"And in your heart of hearts you know you do like him," said Douglas with a severity that she felt such silliness warranted.

"Well, if I do—and—and—maybe I do, I'm not going to take anything off of him that Helen won't."

"Well, I reckon Dr. Wright will be glad to wash his hands of us, anyhow," said Nan. "I can't see that it would be any sweet boon to look after you and Helen or any of us, for that matter."

"I should think not," laughed Douglas; "but you see his having power of attorney from Father

makes it necessary for us to consult with him about some things, selling the automobile, for instance, and renting the house."

"Selling the car!" wailed Lucy. "I think it is foolishness to do that. I'd like to know how you are to occupy Dan, the chauffeur, if we haven't a car to keep him busy."

"Oh, you incorrigible girls! Of course we will have to let the chauffeur go immediately; and I've got to tell the servants to-day that we can't keep them. I'll give them all a week's warning, of course."

"I understand all that," said Nan, "so please don't bunch me in with the incorrigibles."

"But, Douglas, Oscar has been with us since long before we were born. I don't see how you can have the heart to dismiss him," and Lucy looked resentfully at her older sister.

"Heart! I haven't the heart to let any of them go, but it would be a great deal more heartless to have them work for us with no money to pay them with."

"Now, Lucy Carter, you've pretty near made

Douglas cry. You sound like a half-wit to me. Heartless, indeed! If you had half of Douglas's heart and one-fourth of her sense, you wouldn't make such remarks," and Nan put her arms around Douglas.

"No, she didn't make me cry, but what does make me feel bad is that Lucy and Helen can't even now realize the state of affairs. I hated to have to tell Helen she mustn't charge anything more, no matter what it is she wants."

"Charge! I should say not! I think I would walk on my uppers all the rest of my life before I'd put any more burden like that on Father," declared Nan.

"But don't people always charge when they haven't got any money? What will we do when we need things?" asked Lucy.

"Do without," said Douglas wearily. She saw it was going to take more than a few hours or a few days to make two of her sisters realize the necessity for reconstruction of their lives. "Helen and I are going right after breakfast to

see real estate agents about getting us a tenant, and Helen is going to purchase some cotton stockings. She still persists in sticking to the letter of her oath not to wear silk stockings until Daddy is home and well."

"I'm going to wear cotton stockings, too, if Helen is."

"So you are, so are all of us, but we are going to keep on with the ones we have until we go to the country. Helen is spending her own money, some she had, on these stockings and no one is buying them for her," and Douglas went back to her room to dress and take up the burden of the day that was beginning to seem very heavy to her young shoulders. "If only Helen and Lucy could see without being knocked down and made to see," she thought. "Poor Father, if he had only not been so unselfish how much better it would have been for all of us now that we have got to face life!"

True to their determination, Douglas and Helen went to several real estate agents. None of them were very encouraging about renting

during the summer months to reliable tenants, but all of them promised to keep an eye open for the young ladies.

"Your father gone off sick?" asked one fatherly old agent. "Well, I saw him going to pieces. Why, Robert Carter did the work of three men. Just look at the small office force he kept and the work he turned out! That meant somebody did the drudgery, and that somebody was the boss. What do the fellows in his office think of this?"

"I—I—don't know," stammered Douglas. She couldn't let the kind old man know that she had not even thought of informing the office of her father's departure. How could she think of everything?

Before seeing any more agents, she and Helen betook themselves to their father's office, a breezy apartment at the top of a great bank building. Two young men were busily engaged on some architectural drawings. They stopped work and came eagerly forward to inquire for Mr. Carter. Their consternation was great on hear-

ing of his sudden departure and their grief and concern very evident.

"We will do all we can to keep things going," said the elder of the two.

"You bet we will!" from the other, who had but recently been advanced from office boy.

"There is a big thing Mr. Carter has been working on for some time, a competitive design for a country club in North Carolina. It is about done and I will do my best to finish it as I think he would want it, and get it off. Did he leave power of attorney with any one? You see, Mr. Carter has two accounts, in different banks, one, his personal account, and one, his business one."

"Yes, Dr. Wright, his physician, was given power of attorney. There was no time to let any of you know as it was important to have Father kept very quiet, with no excitement. Dr. Wright will come in to see you on Monday, I feel sure. He does not get back from New York until to-night."

"More work and responsibility for the doctor," thought Douglas.

"More power over us than we dreamed even," was in Helen's mind.

"We want to rent our house, furnished, for the summer, giving possession immediately, or almost immediately," continued Douglas; "perhaps you may hear of some one who will be interested."

"I know of some one right now," eagerly put in Dick, the promoted office boy. "It is a family who have been driven from Paris by the war. They have been living there for years—got oodlums of money and no place to spend it now, poor things! They want a furnished house for six months with privilege of renewing the lease for a year."

"Oh, please, could you send them to me or me to them right off?"

"Yes, Miss Carter, that's easy! If you go home, I'll have the folks up there in an hour."

"How kind you are!"

"Not a bit of it! I'm so glad I happened to

know about them—and now you will be saved an agent's fee."

"How much do you think we should ask for our house?" said Douglas, appealing to both young men.

"Well, that house is as good a one as there is in Richmond for its size," said Mr. Lane, the elder. "I know, because I helped on it. There is not one piece of defective material in the whole building. Even the nails were inspected. If it had been on Franklin Street, I'd say one hundred a month, unfurnished, with all the baths it has in it; but since it is not on Franklin, I believe one hundred, furnished, would be a fair price."

"Oh, wouldn't that be fine, Douglas?" spoke Helen for the first time. She had been very quiet while these business conferences had been going on. "That will be a whole lot of money. Now we need not feel so poverty stricken."

"Certainly families do live on less," and the young man smiled. "I think Mr. Carter usually takes out about six hundred a month for his household expenses—of course, that's not count-

ing when he buys a car. I know it is none of my business, but I am very much interested to know what you young ladies are going to do with yourselves. If I can be of any assistance, you must call on me."

"Oh, we've got the grandest scheme! I thought of it myself, so I am vastly proud of it. We are going up to Albemarle County, where Father owns a tract of land right on the side of a mountain, and there we are going to spend the summer and take boarders and expect to make a whole lot of money."

"Take boarders? Is there a house there? I understood from Mr. Carter that it was unimproved property."

"So it is. That is the beauty of it. We intend to camp and all the boarders will camp, too."

The young men could not contain themselves but burst out laughing. They had not seen much of their employer's family but they well knew the luxurious lives they lived and their helplessness. It was funny to hear this pretty butterfly

of a girl talking about taking boarders and making money at it.

"It does sound funny," said Douglas when the laugh in which she and Helen had joined subsided, "but we are really going to do it—that is, I think we are," remembering that the Power of Attorney had not yet been consulted and nothing could really be determined on until then. "I don't know about our making lots of money, but we can certainly live much more cheaply camping than any other way."

"That's so!" agreed Mr. Lane. "Now maybe this is where Dick and I can help. Camps have to be built and we can get up some plans for you. There is a book of them just issued and we can get a working plan for you in short order."

"That is splendid. We have a cousin, Lewis Somerville, who is home now and has nothing to do, and he is going up to Albemarle ahead of us and build the camp. I'll tell him to come down and see you and you can tell him all about it."

Then the girls, with many expressions of grati-

tude, hastened home to prepare for the poor rich people who had been driven from Paris and now had no place to spend their money.

They stopped on Broad Street long enough for Helen to spend one of her precious dollars for six sixteen-and-two-third-cent stockings.

"Do you think it would be very extravagant if I spent a dime in market for flowers?" asked Helen. "It would make the house look more cheerful and might make the poor rich people like it better."

"Why, no, I don't think that would be very extravagant," laughed Douglas.

So they went over to the Sixth Street market, where the old colored women sit along the sidewalk, and purchased a gay bunch of wild phlox for a dime. And then Helen could not resist squandering another nickel for a branch of dogwood. They jitneyed home, another extravagance. There was no tangible reason why they should not have ordered out their own car for this business trip they had been forced to take, but it had seemed to both of them a little incon-

gruous to ride in a seven-seated touring car on the mission they had undertaken.

"It doesn't gee with cotton stockings, somehow," declared Helen, "to step out of a good car like ours. Jitneys are much more in keeping."

The exiles from Paris came with the faithful Dick; liked the house; did not mind the price, although furnished houses during the summer months are somewhat a drug in the real estate market; and were ready to close the bargain just as soon as Dr. Wright should return.

The son, an æsthetic looking youth of seventeen, who was Dick's acquaintance, was carried away with the wild phlox and went into ecstasies over the branch of dogwood which Helen had placed near a Japanese print in the library.

"Let's take it, Mamma! It is perfect!" he exclaimed as he stood enraptured by the effect.

Helen always declared that the market flowers rented the house, and so they may have.

CHAPTER VII.

A COINCIDENCE.

"Almost time for Dr. Wright!" exclaimed Douglas. "I believe I heard the R. F. & P. stop at Elba. I do wonder what he is going to say."

"He is going to say we are a set of fools and lunatics and refuse to let us have any money to start the camp. Since we have been so extravagant and selfish for all these years, he'll think we ought to go to the poor house, where we belong," said Helen, frowning. "I can see him now looking through his eyebrows at me with the expression of a hairy wildman in a show."

Dr. Wright came with good news of the travelers. He had not only seen them safely on board but had sailed with them, coming back with the pilot. He reported Mr. Carter as singularly calm and rested already and Mrs. Carter as making an excellent nurse. Evidently he was rather

astonished that that poor lady could make herself useful, and Helen, detecting his astonishment, was immediately on the defensive; but as Dr. Wright was addressing his remarks principally to Douglas, almost ignoring her, she had no chance to let him know what she thought of his daring even to think slightingly of poor little Mumsy.

"I have a scheme for you girls, too, if you won't think I am presumptuous to be making suggestions," he said, now including all four of the sisters.

Of course, Douglas and Nan assured him that they considered it very kind of him to think of them at all, but Helen tossed her head and said nothing. Lucy waited to see what Helen would do and did the same thing, but she could not help smiling at the young doctor when he laughed outright at her ridiculous mimicry of Helen. He flushed, however, showing he was not quite so callous to Helen's scorn and distrust as he would have liked to appear.

"I think the wisest thing for you to do would

be to rent this house, furnished, if you can find a tenant——"

"We've done it!" exclaimed Helen triumphantly.

"That is, we have got a tenant if you think it is best," explained Douglas. "We were going to do nothing without your approval."

"Oh, come now! I have no jurisdiction over you," laughed the young man.

"Isn't power of attorney jurisdiction?" asked Lucy. "Nan says I can't have any more stockings until you permit me."

"Well, well! I must be a terrible bugaboo to you! I don't feel at all qualified to judge of your stockings, little girl, or anything else pertaining to the female attire. It was the merest accident that I was given power of attorney. I am not in the least an appropriate person to be having it. I only consented to have it wished on me when I saw your father was becoming excited and tired over the unexpected hitch when the notary spoke of Miss Douglas's not being of age. I have transferred what cash your father has to your

sister's account. I must find out from you whom you want to look after your affairs and consult that person——"

"But, Dr. Wright, we would lots rather have you, if you don't mind!" exclaimed Douglas. "Any of our kinsmen that we might call on would insist upon our coming to live with them or make us go to some stuffy boarding house or something. They would not look at it as I believe you would at all. We have a scheme, too, but we want to hear yours first."

"My scheme was, as I say, first to rent your house, furnished, and then all of you, with some suitable older person and some man whom you can trust, go and camp out on the side of the mountain in Albemarle. What do you say to it?" The girls burst out laughing, even Helen.

"Dr. Wright, this is absolutely uncanny!" exclaimed Douglas. "That is exactly what we were planning!"

"Only we were going you some better and were to have boarders," drawled Nan.

"Boarders, eh, and what do you know about keeping boarders?" laughed the doctor.

"We know enough not to do the way we have been done by at summer boarding houses where we have been sometimes."

"Well, all I can say is that I think you are a pretty spunky lot. Please tell me which one of you thought up this plan. There must surely have been a current of mental telepathy flowing from one of you girls to me. It was you, I fancy, Miss Douglas."

"No, I am never so quick to see a way out. It was Helen."

"Yes, Helen thought of it, but I came mighty near doing it," declared Lucy. "I would have done it all the way but I went to sleep."

Helen looked as though she did not at all relish having anything even so intangible as a current of mental telepathy connecting her with one whom she was still determined to look upon as an enemy. He was gazing at her with anything but the eyes of an enemy, however, and Nan's remark about his eyes looking like blue flowers high

up on a cliff that you must climb to reach, came back to her. She felt that those flowers were in easy reach for her now; that all she had to do to make this rugged young man her friend was to be decently polite. But her pride was still hurt from his former disapproval and while his present attitude was much better, she still could not bring herself to smile at him. She was very quiet while the other girls unfolded their plans for the camp. She did not take so much pleasure in it now that it was not altogether her scheme. To think that while she was working it up this bumptious young doctor was doing the same thing!

"The keeping boarders part of it was mine, though," she comforted herself by thinking.

Dr. Wright was really astonished by the quickness with which these spoiled girls had acted and their eagerness to begin to be something besides the butterflies they had seemed. Douglas told him of the plans for the camp that the assistant in the office was to draw for them, and then showed him some of the advertisements of their

boarding camp that Nan had been working on all day.

"This is sure to draw a crowd of eager week-enders," he declared. "In fact, I believe you will have more boarders than the mountain will hold."

"I thought it best to have kind of catchy ads that would make people wonder what we were up to anyhow," said Nan. "Now this one is sure to draw a crowd: 'A week-end boarding camp, where one can have all of the discomforts of camping without the responsibility.' Here is another: 'Mountain air makes you hungry! Come to The Week-End Camp and let us feed you.' "

"Fine!" laughed the young man. "But please tell me how you plan to feed the hungry hordes that are sure to swarm to your camp. Do you know how to cook?"

"Helen can make angel's food and I know how to make mayonnaise, but sometimes it goes back on me," said Nan with the whimsical air that always drew a smile from Dr. Wright.

"I can make angel's food, too," declared Lucy.

"Well, angel's food and mayonnaise will be enough surely for hungry hordes."

"Of course, we are going to take some servants with us," said Helen, breaking the vow of silence that she was trying to keep in Dr. Wright's presence. "Old Oscar, our butler, and Susan, the housemaid, have both volunteered to go. I can make more things than angel's food, and, besides, I am going to learn how to do all kinds of things before we go."

"That's so, you can make devil's food," teased Nan. "Somehow I didn't like to mention it."

"Cook is going to teach me to make all kinds of things. I am going to get dinner to-morrow and have already made up bread for breakfast. I am going to buy some of the cutest little bungalow aprons to cook in, pink and blue. I saw them down town this morning. They are what made me think of learning how to cook."

"I'm going to learn how to cook, too, and I must have some aprons just like Helen's."

"All of us are Camp Fire Girls," said Douglas

to the doctor, "and of course we have learned some of the camping stunts, but we have not been as faithful as we might have been."

"I am an old camper and can put you on to many things if you will let me."

"We should be only too glad," responded Douglas sincerely.

"One of the first things is canvas cots. Don't try to sleep on all kinds of contrived beds. Get folding cots and insure comfortable nights. Another is, don't depend altogether on camp fires for cooking. Kerosene stoves and fireless cookers come in mighty handy for steady meal getting. It will be another month at least before you go, won't it?"

"Just about, I think, if we can manage it. We have school to finish and I have some college exams that I want to take, although I see no prospect of college yet. Another thing I want to discuss with you, Dr. Wright, is selling our car. I think that might bring in money enough for us to pay for all the camp fixtures and run us for awhile."

"Certainly; I'll see about that for you immediately."

The young man took his departure with a much higher opinion of the Carter sisters than he had held twenty-four hours before. As for the Carter sisters: they felt so grateful to him for his kindness to their parents and to them that their opinion of him was perforce good. Helen still sniffed disdainfully when his name was mentioned, but she could not forget the expression of approval in his blue eyes when he found that the camping scheme was hers.

CHAPTER VIII.

GWEN.

Bill Tinsley was as keen on the camp building plan as Lewis Somerville had said he would be.

"Sleeping on my arms," was his telegram in answer to the letter he got from Lewis, a letter with R. S. V. P. P. D. Q. plainly marked on the envelope.

"Good old Bill! I almost knew he would tumble at the chance. All of you will like Bill, I know."

"What does he mean by sleeping on his arms?" asked Lucy. "I should think it would make him awfully stiff."

"Oh, that means ready to go at a moment's notice. I bet his kit is packed now."

Mr. Lane and Dick had worked hard on the plans for the camp and had them ready when the would-be builder called for them. Then Mr. Lane and Lewis made a flying trip to Greendale

to look into the lay of the land and to decide on a site for the dining pavilion. It was a spot about one hundred yards from the log cabin, built by the aforesaid sick Englishman, that seemed to them to be intended for just their purpose. It was a hollowed out place in the mountain side, not far from the summit, and four great pine trees formed an almost perfect rectangle of forty by twenty-five feet. In the centre stood a noble tulip poplar.

"Pity to sacrifice him," said Bill Tinsley, whom they had picked up at Charlottesville on their way to Greendale. Bill was a youth of few words but of frequent mirth expressed in uncontrollable fits of laughter that nothing could stop, not even being shipped from West Point. It was this very laugh that had betrayed the hazers. If Bill had only been able to hold in that guffaw of his they would never have been caught. His laugh was unmistakable and through it the whole crowd of wrongdoers was nabbed, poor Lewis along with them although he was innocent.

"No more to blame for laughing than a light-

ning bug for shining," he had declared to Lewis; "but I wish I had died before I got you into this, old fellow."

"Well, it can't be helped, but I bet you will be laughing on the other side of your face before you know it."

The youths had remained fast friends and now that this chance had come for them to be of service and to use the surplus energy that was stored up in their splendidly developed muscles, they were happy at the prospect of being together again.

Mr. Lane took careful measurements and adapted his plans so as to utilize the four trees as natural posts and the great tulip poplar as a support for the roof. Under the pavilion the space was to be made into kitchen and store room. Some little excavating would be necessary for this as measurements showed that one edge of the pavilion would rest almost on the mountain side while the other stood ten feet from the ground.

"I am trying to spare you fellows all the excavating possible, as that is the tedious and un-

interesting part of building," explained Mr. Lane.

"Oh, we can shovel that little pile of dirt away in no time," declared Lewis, feeling his muscles twitch with joy at the prospect of removing mountains. Mr. Lane smiled, knowing full well that it was at least no mole hill they were to tackle.

Within a week after Mr. and Mrs. Carter had sailed on their health-seeking voyage, Lewis and his chum were *en route* for Greendale, all of the lumber for their undertaking ordered and their tools sent on ahead by freight. Bill had gone to Richmond, ostensibly to consult a dentist, but in reality to see the Carter girls, who had aroused in him a great curiosity.

"They must be some girls," had been his laconic remark.

"So they are, the very best fun you ever saw," Lewis had assured him. "They took this thing of waking up and finding themselves poor a great deal better than you and I did waking up and finding ourselves nothing but civilians

when we had expected to be major generals, at least."

The Carter girls had one and all liked Bill, when Lewis took him to call on them the evening of his arrival in Richmond.

"There is something so frank and open in his countenance," said Helen.

"His mouth!" drawled Nan. "Did you ever see or hear such a laugh?"

"He is a great deal nicer than your old Dr. Wright, who looks as though it would take an operation on his risibles to get a laugh out of him."

Bill had offered the services of a battered Ford car he had in Charlottesville as pack mule for the camp and it was joyfully accepted. He and Lewis stopped in Charlottesville on their way to Greendale and got the tried old car, making the last leg of their trip in it.

They had decided to sleep in the Englishman's cabin, as the little log house that went with the property was always called, but Miss Somerville had made them promise to burn sulphur candles

before they went in and was deeply grieved because her beloved nephew refused to carry with him a quart bottle of crude carbolic acid that she felt was necessary to ward off germs.

It was late in the afternoon as the faithful Ford chugged its way up the mountain road to the site of the proposed camp. The boys had stopped at the station at Greendale and taken in all the tools they could stow away, determined to begin work at excavating the first thing in the morning.

"Let's lay out the ground this afternoon," proposed Lewis.

"There's nothing to lay out since the four pine trees mark the corners. I, for one, am going to lay out myself and rest and try to decide which one of your cousins is the most beautiful."

"Douglas, of course! The others can't hold a candle to her, although Helen is some looker and Nan has certainly got something about her that makes a fellow kind of blink. And that Lucy is going to grow up to her long legs some day and maybe step ahead of all of them."

"Well, I'm mighty glad you thought about giving me this job of working for such nice gals." These young men always spoke of themselves as being in the employ of the Carter girls, and all the time they were building the camp they religiously kept themselves to certain hours as though any laxity would be cheating their bosses. Besides, the regular habits that two years at West Point had drilled into them would have been difficult to break.

"I don't know how to loaf," complained Lewis. "That's the dickens of it."

"Me, neither!"

"They say the Government makes machines of its men."

"True! I am a perpetual motion machine."

They were busily engaged on their first morning in the mountains, plying pick and shovel. They bent their brave young shoulders to the task with evident enjoyment in the work. When they did straighten up to get the kinks out of their backs, they looked out across a wonderful country which they fully appreciated as being

wonderful, but raving about landscapes and Nature was not in their line and they would quickly bend again to the task in a somewhat shamefaced way.

The orchards of Albemarle County in Virginia are noted and the green of an apple tree in May is something no one need be ashamed to admire openly, but all these boys would say on the subject was:

"Good apple year, I hope."

"Yep! Albemarle pippins are sho' good eats."

Moving mountains was not quite so easy as they had expected it to be. They remembered what Mr. Lane had said about excavating when the sun showed it to be high noon and after five hours' steady work they had made but little impression on the pile they were to dig away.

"Gee, we make no impression at all!" said Lewis. "I verily believe little Bobby Carter could have done as much as we have if he had been turned loose to play mud pies here."

"Well, let's stop and eat. I haven't laughed

for an hour," and Bill gave out one of his guffaws that echoed from peak to peak and started two rabbits out of the bushes and actually dislodged a great stone that went rolling down the side of the mountain into an abyss below. At least, his laugh seemed to be the cause but Bill declared it was somebody or something, and to be sure a little mountain boy came from behind a boulder, grinning from ear to ear.

"What be you uns a-doin'?"

"Crocheting a shawl for Aunty," said Lewis solemnly.

"Well, we uns is got a mule an' a scoop that could make a shawl fer Aunty quicker'n you uns." This brought forth another mighty peal from Bill and another stone rolled down the mountain side.

"Good for you, son!" exclaimed Lewis. "Suppose you fetch the mule here this afternoon and we'll have a sewing bee. What do you say, Bill? Do you believe we would ever in the world get this dirt moved?"

"Doubt it."

"Do you uns want we uns to drive the critter? We uns mostly goes along 'thout no axtra chawge."

"Sure we want you. What do you charge for the mule and driver?"

"Wal, time was when Josephus brought as much as fifty cents a day, but he ain't to say so spry as onct, an' now we uns will be satisfied to git thirty cents, with a feedin' of oats."

"Oats! Who has oats? Not I. The only critter we have eats gasoline. I tell you, son, you feed Josephus yourself and we will feed you and pay you fifty cents a day for your animal. I don't believe a mule could work for thirty cents and keep his self-respect."

"Wal, Josephus an' we uns don't want no money what we uns don' arn," and the little mountain boy flushed a dark red under his sun-burned, freckled face.

He was a very ragged youngster of about twelve. His clothes smacked of the soil to such an extent that you could never have told what was their original color. What sleeves there

were left in his shirt certainly must once have been blue, but the body of that garment showed spots of candy pink calico, the kind you are sure to find on the shelves of any country store. His trousers, held up by twine, crossed over his wiry shoulders, were corduroy. They had originally been the color of the earth and time and weather had but deepened their tone. His eyes shone out very clear and blue in contrast to the general dinginess of his attire. His was certainly a very likable face and the young men were very much attracted to the boy, first because of his ready wit, shown from his first words, and then because of his quick resentment at the possibility of any one's giving him or his mule money they had not earned.

"Of course, you are going to earn it," reassured Lewis. "Now you go home and get your mule and as soon as we can cook some dinner for ourselves and satisfy our inner cravings, we will all get to work. You and Josephus can dig and Bill and I will begin to build."

"Please, sir, wouldn't you uns like Gwen to

cook for you uns and wash the platters an' sich? She is a great han' at fixin's."

"Gwen! Who is Gwen?"

Another stone slipped from behind the boulder from which the boy had emerged and then a young girl came timidly forth.

"I am Gwen," she said simply.

She was a girl of about fourteen, very slim and straight, with wide grey eyes that looked very frankly into those of the young men, although you felt a timidity in spite of her directness. Her scant blue dress was clean and whole and her brown hair was parted and braided in two long plaits, showing much care and brushing.

"Oh, how do you do, Miss Gwen? I am Lewis Somerville and this is my friend and fellow laborer, Mr. William Tinsley."

The girl made a little old-fashioned courtesy with a quaint grace that charmed the laborers.

"Do you want me to cook and clean for you?"

"Of course we do! What can you cook?"

"I have learned to cook some very good dishes

at the Mountain Mission School. Maybe you would not like them, though."

"Of course we would like them! When can you start?"

"When you wish!"

"Well, I wish now," put in Bill. "I never tasted meaner coffee than you made last night except what I made myself this morning, and as for your method of broiling bacon—rotten—rotten!"

The girl followed Lewis to the Englishman's cabin and after being shown the provisions, she said she thought she could manage to get dinner without his assistance. He showed her how to light the hard alcohol stove which was part of their outfit and then gave her carte blanche with the canned goods and groceries.

Gwen shook her head in disapproval at sight of the pile of dirty dishes left from breakfast. It would take more than West Point training to make men wash dishes as soon as a meal is over. Lewis and Bill had a method of their own and never washed a plate until both sides had been

eaten from, and not then until they were needed immediately. Supper had been eaten from the top side; breakfast, from the bottom. There were still some clean plates in the hamper, so why wash those yet?

In an incredibly short time Gwen called the young men to dinner. They lay stretched at their ease on a grassy slope near the cabin, quite pleased with themselves and their luck in having found a mule to move the dirt and a girl to cook their food all in one morning.

"What do you make of her?" asked Lewis. "She doesn't talk or walk like a mountain girl."

"Mission School!" commented Bill, looking at the slim, erect back of the girl as she went up the hill to the spring. She had refused their offer of help and said she wanted to get the water herself.

"I don't believe Mission School would have her walking that way. Don't you fancy the boy goes to school, too? Look how he slouches."

Just then the boy, whose name was Josh, appeared, leading Josephus. Surely there never

was such a specimen of horse flesh as that mule. Maud in the comic supplement was beautiful compared to him. His legs had great lumps on them and he was forced to walk with his feet quite far apart to keep from interfering. He was sway backed and spavined and blind in one eye, but there was a kindly expression in his remaining eye that reassured one. One fore leg was shorter than the other, which gave him a leaning, tumbling look that seemed to threaten to upset his equilibrium at every step.

"Well, God bless my soul!" exclaimed Lewis. "Is that Josephus?"

"Yes, sir! He ain't so measly as he looks. He kin do a sight of scrapin' an' dumpin'," and the boy reached an affectionate arm up around the old animal's neck. Josephus responded by snorting in his master's ear. "We uns done brought the implee-ment to make Aunty's shawl," pointing to a rusty old road shovel that Josephus had hitched to him.

"Good! as soon as Miss Gwen feeds us, we will see what he can do in the way of fancy work."

Gwen was a born cook and the domestic science that had been so ably taught in the Mission School had developed her talent wonderfully. She had turned up two empty boxes and smoothed some wrapping paper over them. A bunch of mountain laurel glorified an old soup can and made a beautiful centre piece. The coffee was hot and clear and strong; the hoecake brown and crisp on the outside and soft and creamy within, just as a hoecake should be; the bacon vied with the hoecake in crispness, with no pieces limp and none burned. She had opened a can of baked beans and another of spaghetti, carefully following the directions on the cans as how to serve the contents.

"Well, don't this beat all?" said Bill as he sank down by the improvised table.

"But you must come and eat with us, you and Josh," insisted Lewis.

"Oh, no, the table isn't big enough, and, besides, I must go on baking hoecakes."

"Well, Josh, you come, anyhow."

"No, sir, thanky! We uns will wait for Gwen.

We uns ain't fitten to sit down with the likes of you uns, all dirty with we uns' meat a-stickin' through the rags."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Lewis, "if you are fit to sit with Miss Gwen, you are fit to sit with us. We don't mind your meat sticking through, and as for being dirty—why don't you wash?"

Gwen gave a laugh of delight. "There now, Josh, what do I tell you all the time? Rags don't make a bit of difference if you are just clean."

"Wal, we uns'll eat with Josephus if we uns has to wash. This ain't no time of the week for washin'." But while the young men were enjoying the very appetizing food, Josh did sneak off to the stream and came back with his face and hands several shades fairer.

That afternoon was a busy one for all on that mountain side. Gwen gave the cabin a thorough cleaning, washed all the dishes and put papers on the shelves that were already in the cabin, unpacked the provisions and placed them with the dishes neatly on the shelves and in the old cupboard that still stood in the corner, left there by

the Englishman. She went back to her home for yeast and made up a sponge, planning to have hot rolls for breakfast.

Josephus showed the mettle of his pasture by scraping and dumping about three times as much dirt in an hour as the two West Pointers had been able to move in a whole morning's work. Josh did very spirited driving, pretending all the time that his steed had to be handled very carefully or he would run away, road-shovel and all.

"How did your mule happen to have one leg shorter than the other?" teased Lewis.

"Wal, that's a mounting leg. He got that walkin' round the mounting. All critters in the mountings is built that a way. Ain't you an' Mr. Bill there a-planning that there buildin' after we unses' mule, with short legs up the hill an' long legs down?"

Bill almost fell out of the poplar tree where he had climbed to saw off limbs for twenty feet or more. He laughed so loud and long at the way Josh had gotten ahead of his friend in repartee that Gwen came out of the cabin to see what was

the matter. Bill's laugh was a very disconcerting thing until you got used to him.

That first day showed much accomplished. The excavating was half done; the post holes were dug and logs cut and trimmed and planted ready for the beams. A load of lumber arrived before sundown and that meant no delay in the to-morrow's work.

Six o'clock found them very tired and hungry but Gwen had supper all ready for them, a great dish of scrambled eggs and flannel cakes. She had brought from home a pitcher of milk that stayed delightfully cool in the mountain spring.

"There'll be buttermilk to-morrow," she said, blushing with pleasure at the praise the young men bestowed on her culinary efforts.

"Splendid and more splendid!" exclaimed Lewis. "And will you and your brother just come every day and take care of us?"

"You mean Josh? He is not my brother."

"Oh, cousin, then?"

"No, he is no relation to me. I live with his

mother, though, Aunt Mandy. I have lived with her for five years. I am very fond of Josh, but if he were my brother, I'd simply make him take baths."

"Can't you anyhow as it is?"

"No," sadly. "He thinks it is foolishness. Teacher has told him time and time again and even sent him home, five miles across the mountains, but he won't wash for her or for me. Aunt Mandy thinks it is foolishness, too, but she makes him bathe oftener than he used to in summer."

"Boys will be boys and it is hard to make them anything else. I remember the time well when bathing was something that I thought grown-ups wished on me just for spite, and now a cold shower every morning is as necessary to my happiness as dirt used to be when I was a kid. Bill and I are going to pipe from the spring up there and concoct a shower somehow under the pavilion."

"That will be glorious. Father always meant to use that spring and get a shower at the cabin."

"Your father!"

"Yes, my father was the man who built the Englishman's cabin. He died five years ago."

"Gee whilikins! Now I understand!"

CHAPTER IX.

SOME LETTERS.

From Lewis Somerville to Douglas Carter.

Greendale, Va., May —, 19—.

Dear Douglas:

Bill and I are coming on finely. Already the noble palace is rearing its head. We've got the posts planted and the uprights and rafters in place and will begin on the roof to-morrow. Bill is a perfect glutton for work. Speaking of gluttons—we've got a cook. A perfect gem of a cook who has been born and bred at Lonesomehurst and doesn't mind the country. We are going to hang on to her like grim Death to a dead nigger.

The funny thing about her is she is a real lady. I spotted it from the beginning from a certain way she had with her. She is only fourteen and her father, who, by the way, was the Englishman who built this cabin and used to own the side of the mountain, has been dead five years; but before he died this child evidently learned to eat with a fork and to take a daily bath and to keep her hair smooth. She handles the King's English with the same respect and grace she does a fork, and her speech is very marked because of the contrast between it and the we uns and you uns and you allses of the ordinary mountaineer.

She has lived ever since her father's death with Aunt Mandy, a regular old mountain character who looks as though she might have stepped out of one of John Fox's books. She is the same back and front, concave both ways—slightly more convex in the back than the front. She stands a good six feet in her stocking feet (although I doubt her ever having on a pair). I have never seen her without a snuff stick in her mouth except once and then she had a corn-cob pipe. She is as sharp as a tack and woe be to the one who engages her in a contest of wit.

Josh is her son and Josephus her mule. Mr. Mandy is dead, and Aunt Mandy and Josh, who is twelve, I think, have scratched a living out of their "clarin' " with the help of Josephus, who is as much of a character as Aunt Mandy and Josh.

When the Englishman died, Aunt Mandy took the little orphan Gwendolin to her house, never dreaming that there was anything for her to do but take her. She has been as good as gold to the girl and shared her corn pone and drippings with a heart of charity. Gwen is surely making up to her now for all her kindness as she does all the housework for her foster mother and all kinds of sewing and knitting, which she sells to the summer boarders down at the hotel at Greendale. I am crazy to engage Gwen and Josh for you girls but am afraid of butting in on your arrangements.

Josh is delicious. He did not learn to wash from an English father nor to handle a fork, nor yet to speak the King's English—but good old Aunt Mandy has endowed him plentifully with a

keen wit and as good and kind a heart as she herself has. Maybe he does not speak the King's English but one thing sure: the King himself could not boast a finer sense of honor and pride.

I have done one thing that may be butting in, but it seems to me to be so necessary that I am sure you will forgive me: I have had Josh and Josephus plow up a piece of land on top the mountain, where the Englishman once had a garden, and there I have planned to set out a lot of vegetables. It is late to start a garden but there are lots of things that will come in mighty handy for you when you have a camp full of boarders. This was Gwen's suggestion. Aunt Mandy and Josh are enlarging their garden with a hope of selling things to you and they are also planning to sell you milk. I say all right to that, provided Gwen does the milking, but I am sure if Josh does it, it will look like cocoa by the time we get it, no matter how much it is strained. He is certainly one dirty boy but I comfort myself with the thought that it is clean Mother Earth dirt, the kind Bobby gets on him, and, after all, that isn't so germy.

We are having glorious weather and I do wish you girls could be here, but no doubt if you were, we would not eat up work quite so fast as we are doing now. We are enjoying ourselves greatly and are getting over our terrible disappointment. If Uncle Sam doesn't want us to soldier for him in times of peace we will show him what we are good for in times of war. I did think right seriously of enlisting with the Canadians and going over to help the Allies, but somehow I have a

feeling I won't butt in on Europe's troubles but wait for one of our own which is sure to turn up sooner or later. In the meantime, thanks to you girls, we work so hard in the day time that when night comes there is nothing to do but sleep. I could sleep on a rock pile I am so tired, but instead of a rock pile, a nice canvas cot serves me very well. We have all kinds of schemes for comfort but I am not going to tell you of them as they may not pan out as we expect, and then if they do come right, we can surprise you with them.

Bill sends his regards. He stayed awake for a little while one night trying to decide which one of you was the most beautiful, but as he had to give it up, he has lost no more sleep on the subject. One thing that makes us work so hard is that we feel that as soon as we get the place habitable you will come and inhabit. My love to the girls and Bobby. Tell him there is so much mischief he can get in up here, I know he is going to have the time of his life.

Your devoted cousin,

LEWIS SOMERVILLE.

Miss Elizabeth Somerville to Lewis Somerville.

Richmond, Va.

My dear Nephew:

Your letters have been most satisfactory and I am deeply grateful to you for writing so frequently and in such detail. I spent yesterday afternoon with the Carter girls and Douglas read

me your last letter to her. I must say your description of the mountain woman and her son is far from pleasant.

You are very much mistaken, germs do lurk in the earth. Tetanus and hookworm are both taken in directly from the earth, and meningitis is considered by some of the best authorities to be a product of rotting wood. Did the Englishman die of T. B.? If he did, no power on earth will make me sleep in that cabin. The daughter no doubt has inherited the disease from her parent and is this moment stirring the dread germ into your batter cakes. She sounds to be very industrious and efficient. Do not praise her too much but remember: "A new broom sweeps clean." Please find out from this girl what was the matter with her father. Did you burn the sulphur candles?

The Carter's tenants take possession of their house next week and then all of the girls and that Bobby, who is certainly a living illustration of "Spare the rod and spoil the child," will come to me until it is time to go to the mountains. It will be quite a care for me, but I do not forget that my mother, your grandmother, was brought up in their grandfather's house. "Cast your bread upon the waters and after many days," etc. Old Cousin Robert Carter left no money but many debts, debts to himself just like this one that I owe him.

Please let me know by return mail what was the matter with the Englishman and if he died of T. B.'s. Your devoted

AUNT LIZZIE.

Telegram from Lewis Somerville to his Aunt Lizzie.

Englishman had melancholia and committed suicide. Lungs sound. LEWIS.

From Douglas Carter to Lewis Somerville.

Richmond, Va., May —, 19—.

My dear Lewis:

You don't know how we appreciate your kindness in going up to the mountains and working so hard for us. We feel as though we could never repay you and Mr. Tinsley for your kindness. Everything you have to say about the camp sounds delightful. As for your butting in—you know you couldn't do that. If you think Josh and the little English girl would be good ones to have for the Week-End Boarding Camp, why you just engage them. We are so inexperienced that sometimes I think we are perfectly crazy to undertake this thing, but then I think if the boarders don't like our ways they don't have to stay, and certainly one week-end would not kill them. They don't have to come back, either.

Nan's funny ads have called forth all kinds of replies and already we have many applications for board. One woman wants us to take care of her six children as she wants to go to the war zone as Red Cross nurse. We had to turn that down as Bobby will be about all we can manage in the way of kids. She only wanted to pay two

full boards for the six children as she declared their ages aggregated only thirty-seven, which would not be as much as two full grown persons.

Some of our school friends are eager to go, and as Cousin Lizzie has a reputation for being a very strict chaperone, their mothers are willing. Mr. Lane and Dick, the two young men in Father's office, are both coming up when they can and they are going to send us some of their friends.

While you have been working so hard, we, too, have not been idle. Of course, school has kept me very busy as I am anxious to take my exams and make all the points I can for college, whether I am to go next year or not. Helen has decided that her schooling just now is of very little importance since she has no idea of going in for college, so she has simply quit; but she is very busy, busier than any of us perhaps. She is learning all the cooking that our cook can teach her in the few days she is to be with us, and she has also joined a domestic science class at the Y. W. C. A. and has added jelly roll and chocolate pie to her list of culinary accomplishments.

Dr. Wright made a splendid suggestion: that each one of us learns to cook a meal, a different menu for each girl. If we do that, we can change about and give the boarders some variety, and then the responsibility would not rest too heavily on any one of us. Nan and I are trying it and on Saturday I am to serve the family a dinner under cook's directions. Helen, of course, scorns Dr. Wright's suggestion and Lucy says she won't learn anything Helen won't.

Susan, this housegirl who is to go with us, cannot cook at all, but we are to have her wash the dishes and make up beds, or cots, and set the tables, etc. Oscar will wait on the table and help with the dishes.

We are looking out for a cook, but the trouble is good cooks are already cooking. This old woman who has been with us for years is weeping all the time because she is too afraid of snakes to go to the mountains. I have found her a good home and next week she leaves us. Oscar says he can cook but he has lived with us, as Lucy says, since before we were born, and no one has ever known of his so much as making a cup of tea or a piece of toast, and I am afraid that he has hid his light under a bushel for so long that it has perhaps gone out.

We have sold the car and all debts are paid, and we have a tidy little sum to buy camping outfits and also provisions. Mr. Lane assures me that the store room will be large enough for a quantity of provisions, so we are ordering everything by the barrel, except pepper, of course. It saves a lot and Schmidt pays the freight. We already have a list as long as I am of things we have to get, and every day one of us thinks of more things.

We are filled with admiration for you that you should have thought of a garden. Have you looked into the matter of chickens? I remember when we have boarded in the country chickens were what we and all the other boarders clamored for. I want to have fried chicken on my menu that I am to learn to cook, but they are so

terribly high now in town that I shall have to put in a substitute and learn how to fry chickens when they get cheaper, which they will surely do later on.

Dear Cousin Lizzie, who has been kindness itself, is to take us to her home after this week, where we will stay until we go to the mountains. It is so good of her to go with us. I just know she hates it and we must all of us try to make things as easy for her as possible. Will the cabin be comfortable? When the other things are freighted, I am going to send a little iron bed with a good mattress, also an easy chair for her to be comfortable in.

Please remember me to Mr. Tinsley. All the girls send messages to both of you.

Very sincerely,

DOUGLAS CARTER.

From Mrs. Carter to her children.

My darling children:

I am writing this on the steamer but expect to mail it at Bermuda. You are in my thoughts every moment, but my dreams of you are so sweet and peaceful that somehow I feel that you are all right. I know you are anxious about your beloved father and I am very happy to tell you that he is much better. It seems that every day puts new life in him. At first he lay so quiet and slept so much that a strange dread filled my heart. The young surgeon on board, who is a friend of Dr. Wright, assured me that sleep was the best

thing for him, but while he slept, I would get so lonely that I could hardly stand it. I had time to think much of what a poor wife I have been to him and foolish mother to all of you. I have not worried him with my grievance against myself, however, and I am not going to worry you, but am going to be less selfish with him and may even be stricter with you. He lets me wait on him now and he thinks it is a great joke to lie still and ask me to bring water or to fill his pipe or do something equally easy.

Sometimes he worries about his business, but I won't let him talk about it. He thinks he hasn't any money left, but of course I know that is nonsense. Dr. Wright told me he would look after you girls and see that you were well taken care of. As for money,—why, you don't need much cash and our credit at the shops is perfectly good, and you can get what you need. If you summer in the mountains, which is what Dr. Wright hinted you might do, you must all of you have plenty of little afternoon frocks. I hate to see girls at the springs wear the same clothes morning and afternoon. Don't be dowdy, I pray of you.

You had better take Susan wherever you go so she can look after Bobby, who is too large for a nurse, I know, but who needs much attention. Susan can look after your clothes, too, and do up your lace collars and keep your boots cleaned. Keep the other servants in town on full pay and be sure that they have plenty of provisions. I think nothing is so horrid as the habit some persons have of letting servants shift for themselves

while they are off enjoying themselves at the springs.

I am hoping for letters when we land at Bermuda. I am hungry for news of all of you. Your poor father talks a great deal of you and wants to go over incidents of your childhood. He says he is relying on your good sense to keep you from harm until we return.

We both of us liked Dr. Wright very much,—at least, your father liked him. I was too afraid of him to call it liking but I trusted him implicitly, and now that your father is so much better, I know that his treatment was exactly the right thing. This young surgeon on board says that Dr. Wright is one of the very finest young men in the profession and his friends expect great things of him.

Our quarters are very comfortable and, strange to say, although the food is far from dainty, I am enjoying it very much. It is well cooked and everything is spotlessly clean. They have room for only thirty passengers on this boat as it is entirely given up to freight. This young surgeon has accepted a position on the boat so he can have time to do some writing he is deep in.

It is a very lazy, peaceful life and somehow I feel that your father and I have always been on this boat and that all the rest of it is a dream—even my dear children are just dream children. I believe that is the state of mind that Dr. Wright wanted your father to attain. I think he has attained it, too. He worries less and less and will lie for hours in his deck chair watching the sailors at work, seemingly with no care in the world.

Tell my dear little Bobby he must be very good and must mind all his sisters, even Lucy. There is no scrap of news too small to interest us and you must tell us what you are doing and all the doings of your friends. Give our kindest regards to all the servants and tell them I know they are taking good care of you in our absence.

Good by, my darlings,

Your MOTHER.

Bobby to his father.

richmond, vA.

Dere farther?

i am sho mising U. These here gurls is sech tickular feblemales they Dont let a feller git no durt on him atall. I is printin this my silf but arsker is tellin me how to spil them Few wourds what i aint come tow yit in my book. dr Right is awl right wich is a joak. he has reglar ingauged me as his shover to hole out my arum whin we gose Round cornders. also to set in his cyar an keep the big hudlams from Swipang it. They has bin mutch trubble in richmond latly becuze of swipars. They jes takes cyars and joy riders in them and leaves them in some Dish in the subbubs? whitch gose tow show they is jes half way bunglars or robers. Plese tell my muther that i aint never seed any lady yet what is so nice as she Is. I helped dr. Right mend a tior yestiddy. it war a puctuashun an speakin of them things I hope you and muther is noticing how i am a usin punctuashuns in my letter? sum-

time i Am goin to make a joak to dr. Right bout that whin he runs over a broaken botle, i aint quiet sho how i will uze it but i can bring it in sumhow. Did you all no that we air po now! i is goin to dress in ovarawls and aint never goin to wash no more when onct we gits in the mauntings. they is a boy up there what never washis an lewis Somevil say they is a cow up thair what gives choclid. whineva that nice boy milks. Helen bernt her thum tryin to brile a stake an lucy had to bern hern to. boath of them bernt the stake awlso. Dugles saiz i have rit enuf but i still have mutch to tel. i am very good when i am a slep an when dr. Right lets me be his siztant. he is bout the nisest man i ever seed but helen saiz he looks like a man she can mak with a Hatchet. i done tole him what she saiz an he got right redd an sed he was bliged to my fare sister. I awlso tole helen what he sed an that wuz when she bernt her thum. No more from me at presence,

bobbY.

From Gwen to Teacher.

Greendale, Va.
May —, 19—.

My dear Teacher:

At first, I missed the school so much that I felt as though I could hardly stand to have you away for four long months. Now I am so busy that it is growing much easier for me. Even Josh says he misses you, too, but I think he is very

happy in not having to bathe. I make him say some lessons to me every day and practice his penmanship.

Some gentlemen from Richmond, the capital of the state, situated on the James, are now building a camp on the land that my father at one time owned. They have engaged Josh and me to serve in the capacity of cook and gardener. I, of course, am the cook. I find I can apply the knowledge that you have imparted to me at school, and the young gentlemen are very kind in praising my culinary efforts. I learned that word from Mr. Somerville who used it quite often and then I looked it up in my school dictionary and now have added it to my vocabulary.

At first, I felt almost faint when I had to go in the cabin where Father and I used to live, but it was necessary if I was going to do anything for these young gentlemen, and now the horror of the cabin has passed from me. I believe I would not even mind being there at night, but Josh says he is afraid of haunts. Of course he expresses himself as "feard er hants." Josh distresses me because he will not try to speak proper English. He is so good except for not washing and saying we uns, etc.

I try not to be critical of my surroundings, remembering as I ever must, how good Aunt Mandy and Josh have been to me, because even before Father died Aunt Mandy was the only woman I could remember who had ever been loving to me. I do wish they liked to wash more than they do, though. I try to keep Aunt Mandy's cabin clean and she likes it now that she does

not have to do it herself. I set the table carefully, too, and she likes the flowers I put in the centre. I think Aunt Mandy would have been cultured if she had ever had the chance. She loves beautiful things like sunsets and distant mountains.

I think Mr. Somerville and Mr. Bill Tinsley like beautiful things, too, but they are like Josh in some respects. I believe Josh would just as soon have some one see him cry as to come right out and say he was really admiring a view. These young gentlemen don't mind saying girls are pretty, in fact, they are quite frank about saying they are even beautiful and have long discussions about which young lady is the most beautiful of some sisters, the Misses Carter, who are coming up here to be the mistresses of this camp. I am very eagerly awaiting their arrival. I am to be employed regularly by them, so Mr. Somerville has just informed me, and I am going to make a great deal of money, enough to enable me to buy the books I need and have some warm clothes for next winter and to pay for my schooling. I appreciate the kindness of the Mission School in giving me my tuition so far, and now I am extremely happy that I will be able to pay something, and that will give the chance to some other child in the mountains to get an education. The young ladies are to give me ten dollars a month for four months. Don't you consider this a rare opportunity? Josh and Josephus are also employed by the month.

I am afraid that my letter is composed in a stilted manner. You remember that is the com-

plaint you have always made in my compositions, but I find it impossible to be free and easy in my writing.

Very sincerely and affectionately,
GWENDOLIN BROWN.

CHAPTER X.

OFF FOR THE MOUNTAINS.

On the train at last and headed for the mountains!

That month of preparation had been about the busiest in the lives of the Carter girls. Douglas had graduated at school and taken her examinations for college, besides being the head and guiding star of the family. Her father's burden seemed to have fallen on her young shoulders; everything was brought to her to decide. Helen was fully capable of taking the initiative but her extravagant tendencies were constantly cropping up, and Douglas was afraid to give her free rein for fear she would overturn them in a ditch of debt.

The letter from their mother had been unfortunate in a measure since it had but strengthened Helen's ideas on what was suitable in the way of clothes. She wanted to plunge into the extrava-

gance of outing suits and pig-skin shoes and all kinds of extremely attractive camping get-ups advertised in New York papers. Douglas was firm, however, and Helen was forced to content herself with a love of a corduroy skirt, cold gravy in color, with sport pockets and smoked pearl buttons. Lucy had pouted a whole day because she could not have one, too, just like it.

Nan was a great comfort to Douglas as she was fully sensible of the importance of their not charging anything, no matter how small, so that when their father did recover he would not have debts awaiting him. The only trouble about Nan was she was so often in a dream, and her memory was not to be depended upon. With all the good intentions in the world she would forget to deliver a most important message, or would promise and mean to attend to something and then lose herself in a book of poetry and forget it absolutely.

Lucy was gay and bright and very useful when it came to running errands. Her only trouble was the constant sparring with Helen, whom she secretly admired more than any one in the world.

Master Bobby had spent a blissful month of "shoving" for Dr. Wright. Dr. Wright had a theory that all children were naturally good and that when they were seemingly naughty it was only because they were not sufficiently occupied.

"Give the smallest child some real responsibility and he is sure to be worthy of it. If their brains and hands and feet are busy with something that they feel is worth while, children are sure to be happy." Bobby had sat in his car a half hour at a time, while the doctor was busy with patients, perfectly happy and good, contenting himself with playing chauffeur. He would occasionally toot the horn just to let the passer-by understand that he was on the job.

The beloved home had been put in apple pie order and handed over to the poor, rich fugitives from the war zone. The kind old cook had bidden them a tearful farewell and betaken herself to her new place after careful admonishings of her pupil, Helen, not to let nobody 'suade her that any new fangled yeast is so good as tater yeast.

The real fun in the venture was buying the provisions and necessary camping outfits. That was money that must be spent and they could do it with a clear conscience. The lists were written and rewritten and revised a score of times until they could not think of a single thing that had been left out. The freight was sent off several days ahead of them to give poor Cousin Lizzie's bed time to get there before them.

Poor Cousin Lizzie, indeed! She was brave about the undertaking up to the time of starting, but when she was handed into the common coach, there being no parlor car on that morning train, she almost gave up. Nothing but the memory of old Cousin Robert Carter's kindness to her mother sustained her.

"A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children," she muttered as she sank on the dusty, dingy cushions of the very common, common day coach. "That is surely what old Cousin Robert Carter did. I have not ridden in such a coach for more than thirty years, I am sure. Why was this train chosen? There must be good

trains running to the mountains that have chair cars."

"Yes, Cousin Lizzie," said Douglas, "but you see Greendale is a very small station and only the very accommodating accommodations stop there. The trains with chair cars stop only at the big places."

Douglas was very tired and looked it. She was very pale and her firm mouth would tremble a little in spite of her self-control. No one seemed to notice it, as every one was tired and every one had been busy. She felt when they were once off that she could rest, if only Cousin Lizzie would not complain too much and if Helen and Lucy would not squabble and if dear little Bobby would not poke his head too far out of the window.

Dr. Wright came down to see them off and as he shook hands with Douglas, he looked very searchingly at her tired face.

"You must be selfish when you get to the mountains and rest for a week," he said. "You are about all in."

"Oh, I'll be all right in a few minutes. It is

just getting started that has tired me. Bobby, please don't poke your head out,—your arm, either. Don't you know something might come along and chop you right in two?"

"I'm a shover for this here train. If I don't stick my arm way out the train a-runnin' up behind us will c'lision with us."

"See here, young man, you are still in my employ and I don't intend to have you working for the C. & O. while you are working for me. When my chauffeur travels to the mountains, he has to keep his hands inside the windows and his head, too. He must be kind to his sisters, especially his Sister Douglas, who is very tired. I am really letting you off duty so you can take care of Douglas. You see, when a lot of women start on a trip they have to have some man with them to look after them."

"That's so, boss, an' I'm goin' to be that man. Women folks is meant to look after eatin's an' to sew up holes an' things. I'm hungry right now!" exclaimed Bobby, man-like, finding some work immediately for the down-trodden sex.

"All aboard!" called the brakeman.

Dr. Wright was bidding hasty adieux when it was discovered that Nan had left the carefully prepared lunch basket in the waiting-room. Poor Nan! She had been occupied trying to remember some lines of Alfred Noyes about a railroad station and had carelessly placed the basket on the seat beside her, and then, in the excitement of getting Oscar and Susan into the colored coach and picking up all the many little parcels and shawls and small pillows that Cousin Lizzie always traveled with, she had forgotten it.

"Oh, let me get off and get it," she implored, but Dr. Wright gently pushed her back into her seat and hastily whispered something to her that made her smile instead of cry, which she was on the verge of doing. She sat quite quietly while the engine puffed its way out of the shed and Dr. Wright jumped off the moving train.

She waved to him and he gave her a reassuring smile.

"He is like the hills," she thought. "'I will

look unto the hills from whence cometh my help.' "

"Nan, how could you?" started Helen, and Lucy chimed in with:

"Yes, how could you?"

"I am so sorry, but maybe it will come all right, anyhow."

"Come all right, anyhow!" sniffed Cousin Lizzie. "It is all right now as far as I am concerned. I certainly could not taste a mouthful in such surroundings as these."

Douglas put her tired head on the dingy, dusty red plush upholstery and closed her eyes. Food made no difference to her. All she wanted was rest. Bobby opened the package of chewing gum that his employer had slipped him as advance wages, and forgot all about the hunger that he had declared a moment before.

"I ain't a keering, Nan, 'bout no lunch. I am goin' to buy all the choclid an' peanuts what the man brings in the train an' old lunch ain't no good nohow."

Nan kept on smiling an enigmatic smile that

mystified Helen and Lucy. They were accustomed to Nan's forgetting things but she was usually so contrite and miserable. Now she just smiled and peeped out the window.

"I don't believe she gives a hang," whispered Lucy to Helen.

"Looks that way. If she had spent hours making the sandwiches, as I did, maybe she would not be so calm about it."

"I made some of them, too."

"Oh, yes, so you did,—about three, I should say."

"Lots more. You're all the time thinking you make all the sandwiches."

Douglas opened her tired eyes at the sharp tone of voice that Lucy had fallen into.

"Girls, please don't squabble."

"All right, we won't! You go to sleep, honey, and I'll keep Bobby from falling out the window and agree with Lucy about everything even if she insists that Dr. Wright is an Adonis. Come here, Bobby. Helen is going to make up a really true story to tell you," and Helen lifted her little

brother from the seat by Douglas. In a few moments he was so absorbed in the wonderful true story about bears and whales that a little boy named Bobby had shot and caught, he did not notice that the train had stopped at the first station after leaving Richmond.

Some excitement on the platform made them all look out the window. The conductor had waved to the engineer his signal for starting when a car came dashing madly up to the station. Frantic pulling of ropes by the accommodating conductor on the accommodating accommodation! A belated traveler, no doubt!

"It's my 'ployer!" screamed Bobby. "Look at him park his car! Ain't he some driver, though?"

It was Dr. Wright, breaking laws as to speed, presuming on the Red Cross tag that the doctors attach to their cars. Several policemen had noted him as he sped through the suburbs, but felt surely it was a matter of life and death when they saw the Red Cross tag, and let him go unmolested and unfined.

"Here it is, Miss Nan!" he called as he waved

the heavy basket, endangering the precious sandwiches. Eager hands drew the basket through an open window while a grinning brakeman and a rather irate conductor got the train started once more.

"Here's some aromatic ammonia! Make Miss Douglas take a teaspoonful in a glass of water," he said to Helen as he handed a small vial to her over Bobby's head. "It almost made me miss the train, but she must have it."

"Oh, Dr. Wright, I am so much obliged to you. You are very kind to us."

"Helen's been making up a wonderfulest true story for me," called Bobby, leaning out dangerously far to see the last of his 'ployer. "So I'm being good an' not worrying Douglas."

There was unalloyed approval now in the blue, blue eyes, and Helen thought, as the young doctor gave one of his rare smiles, that he was really almost handsome.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAMP.

The lunch did not go begging. Even Cousin Lizzie forgot her disgusting surroundings and deigned to partake of Helen's very good lettuce sandwiches. She even pronounced the coffee from the thermos bottle about the best she had tasted for many a day.

"My cook doesn't make very good coffee. I don't know what she does to it. When we go back to Richmond I think I shall get you to show her how you make it, Helen."

Helen smiled and had not the heart to tell her cousin that her own cook had made the coffee, after all. Of all the young Carters, Miss Somerville was fondest of Helen. She had infinite patience with her foibles and thought her regard for dress and style just as it should be.

"A woman's appearance is a very important factor and too much thought cannot be given it,"

she would say. Miss Somerville had boasted much beauty in her youth and still was a very handsome old lady, with a quantity of silver white hair and the complexion of a débutante. "Gentlemen are more attracted by becoming clothes than anything else," she declared, "and of course it is nothing but hypocrisy that makes women say they do not wish to attract the opposite sex." Miss Somerville, having had many opportunities to marry, and having chosen single blessedness of her own free will, always spoke with great authority of the male sex. She always called them gentlemen, however, and the way she said "gentlemen" made you think of dignified persons in long-tailed coats and high stocks who paid their addresses on bended knees.

"Only one more station before we get to Greendale!" exclaimed Douglas. "I feel real rested."

"That's cause I'se been so good," said the angel Bobby. "I ain't a single time had my head an' arm chopped off. I tell you, I don't do shover's work for the C. & O. for nothin'. My boss don't 'low me to work for nobody but jest him."

"You have been as good as gold," said Douglas, "and now I am going to buy you some candy," she added, as the train boy came through crying his wares.

"Choclid?"

"Suppose you have marshmallows instead. They are so much less evident on your countenance," suggested Helen.

"All right! I'd jest as soon 'cause that nice dirty boy in the mountings kin milk me some choclid out'n the cow whenever I gits hungry."

"What a filthy trip it has been!" said Cousin Lizzie as she shook the cinders from her black taffeta suit.

"Yes, it is grimy," declared Helen, "and I came off without my Dorine. I had just got a new one. I do hate to arrive anywhere with a shiny nose. Lend me your vanity box, Douglas, please."

"Vanity box! I never thought about bringing it. It is packed with the other extra, useless things in Cousin Lizzie's trunk room. It never

entered my head that we would want a vanity box at a mountain camp."

"Well, I don't intend to have a shiny nose in a mountain camp any more than any other place. I hate to look greasy."

"Have a marshmallow," drawled Nan. "They are great beautifiers."

So Helen powdered her nose with some of Bobby's candy, much to the amusement of that infant.

Lewis and Bill were waiting for the travelers at the station at Greendale with the ramshackle little car, which they had christened the Mountain Goat because of its hill climbing proclivities. Josh was also there, with the faithful Josephus hitched to an old cart to carry the luggage up to the camp.

The porter from the summer hotel of Greendale was on the platform as the train stopped and he immediately came forward, thinking these stylish passengers were for his hostelry; but the little mountain boy stepped in front of him and said:

"We uns is you allses baggage man," and he seized their grips and parcels and won their hearts as well with his merry blue eyes and soft voice.

"Oh, you must be the dirty boy what's got a choclid cow!" exclaimed Bobby. "I'm a dirty boy, too, now I'm come to live in the mountings an' I'm goin' to be a baggage man, too, if Dr. Wright will let me off from being a shover up here where th' ain't no traffic cops to 'rest you if'n you don't stick out yo' arm goin' round the cornders. I'd most ruther be a baggage man than a shover if'n I can sit in front with you and drive the mule." All this poured forth in one breath while the young men were greeting the ladies.

"All aboard!" shouted the brakeman and the signal was given for the engineer to start.

"Oh, where are Oscar and Susan?" from a distracted Douglas. "Stop, please stop!"

Oscar was discovered peacefuly sleeping and Susan so deep in her beloved dream book that she was oblivious to the passing of time and miles.

They were dragged from the colored coach by the amused brakeman and dumped on the platform as the train made its second rumbling start upgrade.

The bringing of these two servants had been a problem to our girls. They were both of them kind and faithful but were strictly urban in their raising, and how the real rough country would affect them remained to be seen. They sniffed scornfully at the small station with its stuffy waiting-rooms, one for coloreds and one, whites, and looked at the great mountains that closed them in with distrust and scorn.

"Uncle Oscar, this place jes' ain't no place at all," grumbled Susan. "Look at that shack over yonder what passes fer a sto', and this here little po' white boy settin' up yonder on the seat with our Bobby! He needn't think he is goin' ter 'sociate with the quality. You, Bobby, git down from thar an' come hol' my han'!"

"Hol' your grandmother's han'! I ain't no baby. I'm a 'spressman an' am a gointer hol' the mule. That was pretty near a joke," he said,

looking confidingly into the eyes of his new friend. "One reason I was so good a-comin' up here was because we let Susan go in the Jim Crow coach to keep Uncle Oscar comp'ny, 'cause when she is ridin' anywhere near me she's all time wantin' me to hol' her han.' "

"We thought we'd make two loads of you," said Lewis, when the greetings were over. "Bill can go ahead with Aunt Lizzie and some of you while the rest of us walk, and when he puts you out at the camp he can come back and meet us half way."

"Douglas must ride," declared Helen. "She is so tired."

"I'm a lot rested now."

"Yes, sure, you must ride," said Lewis, a shade of disappointment in his tone as he had been rather counting on having a nice little walk and talk with his favorite cousin.

"Say, Lewis, you run the jitney first. Legs stiff and tired sitting still," said Bill magnanimously.

So while Lewis was cheated out of a walk with

Douglas, he had the satisfaction of having her sit beside him as he drove the rickety car up the winding mountain road. Miss Somerville was packed in the back with Nan and Lucy, but when Lucy found that Helen was to walk, she decided to walk, too. Susan was put in her place, and so her feelings were somewhat mollified.

"Josephus ain't above totin' one of the niggers 'long with the trunks," said Josh, determined to get even for the remarks he had heard Oscar and Susan make in regard to "po' white trash." The antagonism that exists between the mountaineer and darkey is hard to overcome.

So Oscar, the proud butler of "nothin' but fust famblies," was forced either to walk up the mountain, something he dreaded, or climb up on the seat of the cart by the despised "po' white trash." He determined on the latter course and took his seat in dignified silence with the expression of one who says: "My head is bloody but unbowed."

"The freight came and we have hauled it up and unpacked the best we could. I am afraid

it is going to be mighty rough for you girls and for poor Aunt Lizzie, who is certainly a brick for coming, but we have done our best," said Lewis to Douglas.

"Rough, indeed! Who would expect divans and Turkish rugs at a camp? We are sure to like it and we are so grateful to you and Mr. Tinsley. But look at the view! Oh, Cousin Lizzie, just look at the view!"

"Now see here, Douglas, I said I would come and chaperone Cousin Robert Carter's granddaughters if no one would make me look at views. Views do not appeal to me." She couldn't help looking at the view, though, as there was nothing else to look at.

"I's jes' lak you, Miss Lizzie. I don' think a thing er views. I ain't never seed one befo' but I heard tell of 'em. Looks lak a view ain't nothin' but jes' seein' fur, an' if'n th'ain't nothin' ter see, what's the use in it?"

Wordsworth's lines came to Nan and she whispered them to herself as she looked off across the wonderful valley:

" 'The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid
boon!
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less for-
lorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.' "

She intended to whisper it to herself but as the march of the lines took possession of her, she spoke them out loud without knowing it. On the ninth line she came out strong with, " 'Great God! I'd rather be—' " Miss Somerville and Susan looked at her in amazement. Her dark eyes were fixed on the despised view with a look of a somnambulist.

"Lawd a mussy! Miss Nan done got a tech er heat!"

"Blow your horn, Lewis. Didn't you hear

Nan?" from Miss Somerville. "She must see something coming."

Nan went off into such a peal of laughter that Bill Tinsley himself could not have vied with her. She blushingly admitted it was just some poetry she was repeating to herself, which made Miss Somerville agree with Susan that Miss Nan had a "tech er heat."

"You had better have a dose of that aromatic ammonia and lie down for a while when we get to the top," suggested Miss Lizzie dryly.

The road stopped at the cabin some distance from the pavilion, so they alighted and Lewis turned the car on a seemingly impossible place and careened down the mountain to pick up the others before they were exhausted with the climb.

The cabin was in perfect order and so clean that even Miss Lizzie was destined to find it difficult to discover germs. Gwen had rubbed and scrubbed and then beautified to the best of her ability. She had purchased a few yards of coarse scrim at the store and fresh curtains were at the windows. The white iron bed was made up in

spotless counterpane and pillows, and on the freshly scrubbed pine floor was a new rag rug of her own weave. The open fireplace was filled with fragrant spruce boughs, and on the high mantel and little deal table she had put cans of honeysuckle and Cherokee roses. She had longed for some vases but had not liked to ask the young men to buy them. She felt that the curtains were all the expense she should plunge them into.

When Gwen had seen the car approaching she had shyly gone behind the cabin. She dreaded in a measure meeting these girls and their cousin. She had become accustomed to the presence of the young gentlemen, but what would the girls think of her? Wouldn't they think she was odd and funny looking? She was quite aware of the fact that she was very different in appearance from the girls in cities. She had pored over too many illustrated papers not to know how other girls her age dressed and looked. Her scant blue dress was made after a pattern sent to the Mission School by some interested ladies. It was supposed to be the best pattern for children to

use where the cloth must be economically cut. So it was and singularly picturesque in its straight lines, but Gwen was but human and now that fashion sheets plainly said wider skirts and flaring, here she was in her narrow little dress! She hated it. Bare legs and feet, too!

Her instinct was to turn and flee around the mountain to the arms of Aunt Mandy, who thought she was the most wonderful little girl in all the world. But there was the kind of fighting blood in her that could not run. The spirit of a grandfather who had been one of the heroes of Balaclava made her hold up her proud little head and go boldly around to the front of the cabin to face the dreadful ladies.

"Oh, you must be Gwen!" exclaimed Douglas, coming forward with both hands to greet the girl. "Mr. Somerville has told us how splendidly you have taken care of them and I know you must have arranged this room for Cousin Lizzie. It is lovely."

Gwen no longer felt like one of the Light Brigade. This was not the jaws of Death and the

mouth of Hell. This sweet young lady didn't even notice her bare feet, and the scanty skirt made no difference at all. She introduced her to Miss Somerville and to her sister, Nan, who was also graciousness itself. Miss Somerville was a little stiff, reminding Gwen of the old ladies on the hotel piazza who bought the lace and tatting that she and Aunt Mandy made on the long winter evenings when the sun went down behind the mountains so early.

"Yes, the room will do very well."

It was rather faint praise and took very little time to say when one considered that Gwen had spent days on her task. But Nan and Douglas made up to her for their cousin's seeming coldness by going into raptures over the cabin.

"Lewis did not tell us he was going to whitewash the room for Cousin Lizzie," said Nan.

"I whitewashed it myself. The young gentlemen were so occupied with constructing the pavilion that I could not bear to interrupt them." Nan and Douglas could not help smiling at the little English girl's stilted language but they hid

their amusement. "I prepared the attic room for the negro maid. Would you like to go up and see that?"

"Yes, indeed! Come on, Susan, and see your room. It is to be right up over Cousin Lizzie's."

"Well, praise be to my Maker that I ain't goin' to have to sleep in the air. My lungs is weak at best an' no doubt the air would be the death of me."

Susan's figure belied her words, as she was an exceedingly buxom girl with a chest expansion that Sandow might have envied her.

The attic was entered by a trap door from the room below and in lieu of stairs there was nothing but a ladder made chicken-steps style: small cross pieces nailed on a board.

The attic room was scrubbed as clean as Miss Lizzie's. The low ceiling and very small windows certainly suited Susan's idea of sanitation, as very little air could find its way into the chamber. A rough wooden bed was built against the wall, as is often the way in mountain cabins, more like a low, deep shelf than a bed. Gwen

had stuffed a new tick with nice clean straw and Susan bid fair to have pleasant dreams on her fresh bed. A night spent without dreams of some kind was one wasted in the eyes of the colored girl who consulted her dream book constantly.

Josh had railed at Gwen for putting a bunch of black-eyed Susans in the attic room.

"Waitin' on a nigger! Humph! You uns ain't called on to lower yo'sef that a way. Niggers is niggers an' we uns would ruther to bust than fetch an' carry fer 'em."

"This seems a very small thing to do," Gwen had answered. She did not share the mountaineer's prejudice against the black race. "I have no doubt this girl will like flowers just as much as Miss Somerville."

So she did and a great deal more, as she expressed her appreciation of the tomato can of posies, and Miss Somerville had not even noticed the bouquets in her room. As Susan followed the girls up the funny steps and her head emerged through the trap door, her eyes immediately fell on the flowers.

"Well, Gawd be praised! My dream is out! I done fell asleep in the cyars an' dream I see little chillun picking flowers in a fiel'. My book say that is one er two interpretations: you is either goin' ter have fresh flowers laid on yer grabe er some one is goin' ter make you a prisint er flowers. I thank yer, little miss, fer the bowkay."

"Indeed, you are welcome," and Gwen gave her a grave smile.

Susan had been quite doubtful at first what her attitude should be with this white girl who went barefooted and whitewashed cabins herself. She knew very well how to treat po' white trash: like the dust under her feet. There was no other way for a self-respecting colored girl to treat them. But this white girl was different, somehow.

"She got a high steppin' way that is mo' like quality," she declared to Oscar later. "She calls that slab-sided, shanty-boat 'ooman Aunt Mandy, but I 'low they ain't no kin. Now that there Josh is low flung. I think Miss Douglas is crazy to let Bobby run around with him as much as she

do. I bet his maw would stop it fast enough."

The Carter girls' enthusiasm and praise for the camp fully repaid the young men for their untiring labor. The pavilion was really a thing of beauty, built right up in the trees, as it were, like a great nest. It had no walls, but the roof projected far enough to keep out anything short of horizontal rain. An artistic rustic seat encircled the great poplar trunk in the centre and rough benches were built around three sides of the hall. Stairs went down on the fourth side to the kitchen in the basement, and outside, steps gave entrance to the pavilion. The whole building was screened. This was to be dining-room, living-room, dance hall and everything and anything they chose to make of it. The girls had reserved their victrola in renting the house and it now had the place of honor near the circular seat.

"We just unpacked it this morning," said Lewis. "There was no use in music with no girls to dance with."

"Aren't men strange creatures?" laughed

Helen. "Now girls love to dance so, they dance with each other, but two men would just as soon do fancy work as dance with one another."

"Sooner," muttered Bill. "Let's have a spin!"

So a spirited "one-step" was put on and then the youths felt themselves to be overpaid for their work as they danced over the floor that had been the cause of many an aching joint and mashed thumb. Joints were not aching now and mashed thumbs were miraculously cured by clasping the hands of these pretty girls.

That first supper in the mountains was a very merry one. Miss Elizabeth was much refreshed by a nap and came to the pavilion quite resigned to life. She had nothing but praise for the handiwork of her beloved nephew, and even included the laconic Bill in her compliments. She wished, however, he would not be so sudden in his laughter as she was afraid it betrayed the vacant mind.

Gwen had made a delicious fricassee of chicken in the fireless cooker, the mysteries of which she had been taught at the mission school. Hot bis-

cuit and honey from Aunt Mandy's hive completed the feast.

"What delicious biscuit!" exclaimed Douglas. "Isn't Gwen a wonder?"

" 'Scuse me, Miss Douglas, but I made them biscuit," said Susan, who was waiting on the table.

"But, Susan, I thought you said you couldn't cook a thing!"

"That was in Richmond. I ain't boun' by no regulations of no club whin I leaves the city. You see in my club, which is called the Loyal Housemaids, we swars never to 'tend to two 'fessions at onct. When we is housemaids, we is housemaids, but out here where th'ain't ter say no house, I kin do as I's a mind, and I sho' did want ter make some biscuit ter go with that there fricassy. Uncle Oscar an' I is goin' ter share the cookin'. An' Miss Gwen is goin' ter do the haid wuck. We ain't conversant with the fi'less cooker an' we don't know nothin' 'tall 'bout lightin' kerosene stoves."

Our girls were much gratified by Susan's will-

ingness to turn in and be of some real assistance. The work when only the family were there would be light, but if the many week-enders who had announced their intention of coming to their camp materialized, they well knew that it would take the combined efforts of them all to feed the hungry hordes and to wash the many dishes and make up the many cots. The laundering of the bed linen and towels would amount to more than they could cope with, so they had decided to patronize a laundry in Charlottesville, for all the flat work.

Bobby was in a state of extreme bliss. He had been allowed to help Josh feed Josephus and now he was permitted to come to supper without doing more towards purifying himself than just "renching the Germans" off his hands and face. He was to sleep in the tent with his Cousin Lewis, too.

The girls' tent was pitched just behind the Englishman's cabin, while the masculine quarters were nearer the pavilion.

"We will put up other tents as we need them,"

said Lewis. "We have chopped down enough trees and cleared enough ground to camp the whole of Richmond."

"Thank goodness, our boarders won't come for a week yet and we can have time to enjoy ourselves for a while," sighed Douglas.

She was very tired but it was not the miserable fatigue she had felt in town. It was a good healthy tired that meant a night's rest with nothing to think about but how good life was and how kind people were. Everything was certainly working out well. Cousin Lizzie was behaving in a wonderful way for an old lady who thought much of her ease and had no love of Nature. Helen and Lucy were too interested to squabble at all and so were getting on splendidly. Bobby was behaving himself beautifully, and even the servants were rising to the occasion and evidently intending to do their best. The only fly in the ointment was their attitude towards Josh and his towards them. He openly called them "niggers," and they called him "po' white" right to his face. Gwen, they seemed to have accepted at her face

value and not judged by her bare feet and scanty frock.

"Niggers, an' min' you, Miss Douglas, we don't 'low nobody but us to call us out of our names that way," said Oscar. "Niggers is reg'lar blood-houn's an' they kin smell out quality same as geologists kin. Me'n Susan knows that that there little Miss Gwen is a lady bawn."

"I believe she is, Oscar, and I hope you and Susan will be just as nice to her as you can be."

"We'll do our best, but land's sake, Miss Douglas, don' arsk us to be gentle with that there Josh. He is low flung and mischeevous to that extent."

"All right, Oscar," laughed Douglas, "but don't be too hard on him." Lewis had told her that Josh was fully capable of taking care of himself and in the trial of wits Josh would certainly come out ahead.

"He already done scart Susan to death, tellin' her about hants in the mountings. He says that Miss Gwen's paw was pestered by a ringin' an' buzzin' in his haid that drove him 'stracted, and he used to roam the mountings trying to git shet

of the sound, til bynby he couldn't stan' it no mo an' up'n jumped off'n a place called the Devil's Gorge and brack ev'y bone in his body. An' he sayed the Englishman still hants these here parts an' you can hear the buzzin' an' ringin' sometimes jes' as plain as the po' man uster hear it in his life time. He say he won't come over here arfter nightfall to save yo neck."

"What nonsense!" declared Douglas. "Well, all the buzzing on earth won't keep me awake," but before she went to sleep, she recounted the ridiculous tale to her three sisters, who shared the tent with her.

They agreed that they would have to ask Lewis to speak to Josh about telling such things to poor Susan, who was already eaten up with superstition.

"Ain't it grand to sleep in a——?" but Lucy was asleep before she said what it was grand to sleep in. Nan tried to recall some lines of Wordsworth that Gwen reminded her of, but "The sweetest thing that ever grew," was all she could think of before sleep got her, too. Helen

forgot to put olive oil on her eyebrows, a darkening process she was much interested in, and went off into happy, dreamless slumber. Douglas shut her tired eyes and sleep claimed her for its own before she could count ten.

CHAPTER XII.

HANTS.

"Help! Help!" The call was followed by a blood-curdling shriek that drowned the noise of tree frogs and whip-poor-wills.

Douglas and Nan both awoke with a start and Helen stirred in her sleep. Lewis, over at the men's tent, made a mental note that he must go out with a gun early in the morning and try to shoot that screech owl. Bill, whose passion next to soldiering was base ball, muttered an unintelligible something about: "Ball two! Strike one! Rotten umpire!"

Oscar heard it, and remembering the terrible tales Josh had been telling, drew his blanket up close over his wool. "Walls don't keep hants out no better'n canvas, but all the same I'd like to know they was somethin' more substantiated around this nigger than jist a dog tent. I's gonter

git some cotton to stuff in my years 'ginst anudder night," he said to himself.

"Help! Help!" again rang out. "The debble is got me! Gawd in Hebben help me!"

"Susan!" gasped the three older girls. They were out of their cots and into kimonos by the help of a flash light Helen had under her pillow, before the call came again. The three-quarter moon had set but the stars gave light enough for them to see the two young men in full tilt, coming to their assistance, rifles in hand and striped bath gowns flapping around bare legs.

"Help! My sweet Gawd, help!"

Miss Somerville had more fear of germs than anything else, so slept with her door wide open. Being a very thorough person in anything she undertook whether it was solitaire, knitting scarves, chaperoning or sleeping, Miss Somerville was now sleeping with all her might. She had pitched her—what would be called a snore in a plebeian person, but we will call it her breathing, —she had pitched her breathing in harmony with

the tree frogs and katydids and was now hitting off a very pretty tune.

Up the chicken steps the young folks trooped, Lewis in front with the flash light, Miss Somerville still sleeping the sleep of the virtuous and just. Poor Susan was lying on her shelf-like bed, her head covered up, having emerged only for yelling purposes and then quickly covering herself again. Her great feet were sticking out at the bottom and on them were perched three large hornets, stinging at their ease. A kerosene lamp, turned down too low and smelling at an unseemly rate, was on the box that served as a table. The windows were tightly closed because of her weak lungs and the air could almost have been cut with its combination of odors, cheap-scented soap, musk and just plain Susan.

"Susan, Susan! What is the matter?" demanded Douglas.

"Oh, little Mistis! That English hant has got me by the toe. I was expecting him after what that there po' white boy done tol' me, but I thought maybe he would be held off by Miss

Lizzie Somerville. Hants ain't likely to worry the quality."

"Nonsense, Susan, nothing has you by the toe," said Helen sternly. "You must have had nightmare."

"But look at the hornets!" exclaimed Nan. "Why, the room is full of them."

Then such an opening of windows and tumbling down that trap door as ensued! Susan had bounced out of bed to join them, regardless of the young men, but since she was enveloped in a high-necked, very thick pink outing flannel gown she was really more clothed than any of them.

"I'd fight 'em if I had on more clothes," declared Bill, as he landed on the floor below.

"Ouch! One got me on the shin then," from Lewis.

"One's down my neck!" squealed Helen.

"Shut the trap door so they won't disturb Cousin Lizzie," commanded Douglas.

They got out of doors without Miss Somerville's even dropping a stitch from the raveled sleeve of care she was so industriously knitting.

"You could almost two-step to it," drawled Nan, nursing a stung finger.

Bill went off into one of his uncontrollable bursts of laughter and the peaceful sleeper stirred.

"Shh! Bill, you must dry up," warned Lewis. "I'll get out another cot and Susan can finish the night in Aunt Lizzie's room."

"Oh, Mr. Lewis, please don't make me go back in yonder. The debble will git me sho next time. I's safter out under the ferment of the stars."

"You can come into our tent, Susan," said Helen kindly. "We are not going to have you scared to death." So the extra cot was brought and room was made for the poor, trembling vision in pink outing flannel.

"Tell us what it was that got you scared," asked Nan when they had once more settled themselves and the young men had gone back to their quarters, much relieved at the way things had turned out.

"Well, that there low-flung Josh was tellin' me 'bout a English hant what had suffered with a

buzzin' an' roarin' in his haid ter that extent he done los' his reason an' one dark night he up'n kilt hissef. An' they do say that the po' man still ain't got no rest from the buzzin' an' he hants these parts, and sometimes them what is 'dicted ter hants kin hear de buzzin' and roarin', 'cause even though the hant is laid the buzzin' an' roarin' roams the mountings lak a lost soul. Whin I gits in the baid, I was plum tuckered out so I didn' wase no time but was soon sleepin' the sleep that falls alike on the jest an' the onjest. I wuck up with a smotherin' feelin'."

"I should think you would, with not a bit of air in your room!"

"I wuck up, as I say, kinder smotherin' like an' then I hears the English hant as plain as day. Bzzzz! Bzzzz! Brrrr! Brrrr! 'My Gawd,' says I, 'pertect me.' I tun over in the baid an' then the buzzin' sounded lak the rushin' of mighty water. 'Mebbe he will pass on by me an' go to Uncle Oscar,' thinks I. 'He was the one what scoffed at Josh's tellin' of the tale.' I kivered my haid an' then that hant got me by the toe."

"But, Susan," laughed Douglas, "of course you know it was a hornet that had you by the toe."

"You mought think it, Miss Douglas, but hants is powerful slick the way they kin change theysefs ter natural things. That debble jes' changed ter hornesses ter mysterfy all of you white folks. He was a debble hant up ter the physological moment all of you appeared. I knows lots about hants from my books."

"Well, I know a lot about hornets from experience," said Helen, trying to reach the stung place between her shoulders.

"Me, too," drawled Nan. "My finger is twice its natural size."

"Well, let's all of us go to sleep now," said Douglas. "You are not afraid in here, are you, Susan?"

"No'm——" and the girl was off asleep in less time than it had taken her to arouse most of the campers.

"Helen," whispered Douglas, "I am afraid Josh is responsible for the hornets. It sounds as

though he had prepared his way to scare Susan by telling the ghost story first."

"I am afraid it is so. We will have to see to that youngster."

"I think Lewis can handle him. I'll ask him in the morning. In the meantime, I will tell Susan not to mention the 'hants' and maybe Josh will give himself away with curiosity."

It was a hard task her young mistresses had set Susan.

"Thain't nothin' 'tall ter hants if you cyarn't tell about 'em," she grumbled.

"Well, just wait a day, Susan, and then you can tell all you've a mind to."

At breakfast that morning Miss Somerville complained that her rest had been very much broken but that she had slept much better than she had ever expected to.

"I am at best a light sleeper," she remarked. "The smallest thing disturbs me. Now I distinctly heard Mr. Tinsley laugh, although he must have been in his own tent."

This was too much for poor Bill, who went off into one of his specialties.

"I'd ruther to laugh like that than sing like Robinson Crusoe in the victrola," said Bobby. "I kin holler real loud but I ain't nothin' of a big laugher. Josh, he don't make no noise 'tall when he laughs. He jist shakes his innards. He was shakin' em this morning 'cause Susan said she had a bee sting on her toe, the reason she is a-limpin' so."

Helen and Douglas exchanged glances with the young men, whom they had informed of their suspicions regarding the humorous Josh.

"Douglas," said Miss Somerville, "I can't see why Bobby should use the language of a negro. He is quite old enough to begin to speak properly."

"Well, you see, Cousin Lizzie, he is really nothing but a baby, and Mother and Father have never corrected him because Father said he would drop it soon enough and he thinks it is so amusing."

"Baby, your grandmother! I am 'most a man

an' Josh is goin' ter learn me how to say we uns an' you uns like he does. He says his teacher an' Gwen is tryin' to make him talk properer, but he ain't goin' to talk no way but what his four bears talks. I wish I had four bears what could talk. I forgot to ask Josh to tell me about them bears but I will, some time."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE AVENGING ANGEL.

"Josh," said Lewis to the mountain boy, whose blue eyes had an extra twinkle in them that morning as he hitched his mule to a nearby pine tree, waiting for orders, "are you afraid of hornets?"

"Not if we uns kin git some kerosene smeared on in time."

"Well, you smear on some kerosene in time and go get that hornet's nest out of Susan's room."

"Well, bless Bob! How did you uns know we uns put it thar under her bed?"

"Never mind how I knew it. You just go and get it and take it far from the camp and then come back here and report for work."

Josh winked at Josephus and went to do Mr. Somerville's bidding.

"He don't look mad," thought Josh. "I hope he ain't mad with we uns." Josh had met his idol

in Lewis Somerville. Boylike he admired strength more than anything in the world, and could not this young giant lift a log and place it on his shoulders and carry it to the desired spot as easily as he himself could carry a twig? There was a poetical streak in this mountain boy, too, that saw in Lewis the young knight. "'Tain't nothin' to fool a nigger," he comforted himself by saying.

"Well, sir," he said cheerfully to Lewis, "the hornets is all good as dead. What must we uns do now?"

"Now you are going to take your punishment for being no gentleman."

"Gentleman! Huh! We uns ain't never set up to be no gentleman."

"Oh, I didn't know that. When I hired you to come work for my cousins, I understood, of course, that you were a gentleman. Otherwise I would not have considered you for a moment. Do you suppose I would have any one come around these ladies who are everything in the world to me if he were not a gentleman?"

"There's that nigger, Oscar! We uns is as good as he is. He ain't no gentleman."

"He is as good a gentleman as there is in the land. He came up here with these young ladies whom he has known ever since they were babies rather than desert them when he thought he might be needed. I have never known Oscar to say a coarse word or do an ungentle act. I, too, have known him all my life. He is a good, clean man, inside and out, and would cut off his hand before he would scare a helpless woman."

" 'Twan't nothin' but a nigger 'ooman!"

"You say nothing but a negro as though that were the lowest thing in the world, and still just now you spoke with a certain pride of being as good as one. Now I tell you, you are not as good as one unless you act better. You have a long line of free English ancestors behind you and these poor things are but recently out of slavery. Now you come with me and take your punishment if you want to stay and work for this camp."

Josh looked rather startled. Did this young

gentleman mean to beat him, and all because he had put a hornet's nest under a silly colored girl's bed? Josh had received many a licking from his raw-boned mother, and when Aunt Mandy whipped, she whipped. He was not afraid of the physical hurt of a beating, but that line of English ancestors of which Lewis had spoken all rebelled in this, their little descendant, against being beaten by any one who was no blood kin.

"March!" said Lewis.

Well, if he were to go to execution like a soldier, he could stand it better. With flashing eyes and head well up, Josh walked on by Lewis's side.

The camp builders had fashioned, with great ingenuity, a shower bath to one side of the kitchen and store-room under the pavilion. The mountain spring was dug out into a very respectable reservoir, and this was piped down to furnish running water in the kitchen and a strong shower in this rough lean-to of a bath-room. The water was cold and clear and the fall was so great that the spray felt like needles. The

young men reveled in this vigorous bathing and the Carter girls had taken a go at it and one and all pronounced it grand.

Josh looked upon this enthusiasm on the subject of mere bathing as affectation. Miss Somerville might have had the same attitude of mind towards persons who liked Limberger cheese or read Sanskrit for pleasure.

Lewis directed his prisoner to this bath-house.

"Anyhow, we uns ain't gonter git licked befo' the niggers," thought Josh with some satisfaction.

"Now take off your clothes," said Lewis sternly.

So he was more thorough than his mother. She contented herself with tickling him on his bare legs, and if the black snake whip could cut through the thin rags he called clothes, all well and good. Josh never remembered her having tackled him in a state of nature. He made no demur, however. If this, his idol, chose to beat him naked, he could do it. He hoped he would draw the blood just so he, Josh, could show these

people from the valley how a mountain boy could take what was coming to him without a whimper.

He dropped the ragged shirt and trousers that constituted his entire clothing and stood before the avenging hero, a thin, wiry little figure about the color of a new potato that has but recently left its bed.

"Now, sir!" he flung out defiantly.

"Stand in the middle of the room," and Lewis began to roll up his shirt sleeves. Josh closed his eyes for a moment. Where was the stick or whip? Did the young gentleman mean to spank him like a baby? That would be too much. Even Aunt Mandy had given up spanking years and years ago.

"Ugh!"

Josh jumped as something struck him suddenly and remembered, as a drowning man might, an incident in his childhood when Aunt Mandy was still in the spanking era. She had gone for him with a hair brush and had inadvertently turned the brush up-side-down and he

had got the full benefit of the bristles on his bare hide.

Lewis had turned on the shower full force and the little new potato was emerging from its coating of Mother Earth. Gasping and spluttering, Josh stood his ground. He wanted to run into a far corner to escape this terrible fusillade, but an inward grit that was greater than the outward show made him stay in the spot where his commander had first placed him. Lewis gradually lessened the force of the shower and once more the culprit could breathe. He gave a long, gasping sigh and then grinned into the face of his monitor.

"Gee, that was the wust beatin' we uns ever got! Somehow all the nigger-hate ain't washed out'n we unses' hide yit. Mebbe you uns had best turn it on agin."

"All right, but take this soap first and lather yourself all over."

That was more than Josh had bargained for, but the soap was nice and fresh smelling and the lather came without labor. This form of ablu-

tion was very different from what Josh had been accustomed to. His idea of a bath had always been first the toting of much water from the spring, a truly difficult task, for, with the short sightedness of country people, of course their cabin was built far above the spring instead of below it. This letting gravity help do the work is a comparatively new thing and one that country people have not generally adopted. Then, to Josh, the bath meant chopping of more wood to make the fire to heat the water. Then a steaming wash tub and the doughty Aunt Mandy equipped with a can of foul-smelling, home-made soft soap and a scrubbing brush.

This delightful tingling of his unaccustomed skin with the nice white soap was a sensation that seemed to Josh the most wonderful he had ever experienced. All of these delights with no labor attached to the enjoyment of them! Just turn a handle and there you are, clean and cool, laundried while you wait.

"Kin we uns do this every week?"

"Every day, if you've a mind to. It certainly

improves your appearance. Don't you feel good?"

"Yessirree! Jes' like a mockin' bird sounds on a mornin' in May when his wife wants him to come on and help her build the nes' aginst the time when she has got to lay the eggs, and he wants to sing all day and jes' use las' year's nes'. Don't know as we uns ever did feel quite so like a—a—gentleman."

"Good for you, Josh! Now put on your clothes. Here's a towel. We've got a lot of work to do to-day, and you and Josephus must help."

"All right, sir! Wish Josephus could a had the beatin' we uns done got. 'Twould sho have made him feel like he had a extra feedin' er oats. We uns is 'bliged to you uns, sir. You uns done made a gentleman out'n we uns an' mebbe a few more showers will turn we uns into a nigger lover," and Josh's blue eyes twinkled merrily from the setting of a clean, pink face.

Bobby was the only person not pleased by the improvement in Josh. "Grown-ups is all time

wantin' to clean up folks. Josh was a million times prettier dirty, an' now he can't make choclid milk no mo'. I think Cousin Lewis is done ruint him."

After that morning, whenever Josh was wanted and not to be found he could usually be discovered taking a shower bath. He evidently felt he must make up for lost time, all those years when he had gone crusty, as he expressed it.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WEEK-ENDERS.

"If the weather only holds!" exclaimed Douglas. "This first week-end is the most important of all. If the boarders have a good time they will want to come back, and then they will give us such a good name that others will want to come, too."

"People who can't rise above mere weather should be taught a lesson," declared Helen.

"Nonsense, child!" from Miss Somerville. "Weather is something no one can rise above. A week of rain in these mountains would make all of us ready to kill each other and then commit suicide."

"I hope we won't be put to the test," said Nan.

"I should hope not! 'Continual dripping on a rainy day' is a proverbial evil. I hope some bridge players will be numbered among the guests. I am hungry for a game."

"Why, Cousin Lizzie, you know we don't mind playing a bit," said Helen. "Why don't you ask us whenever you want to?"

"Don't mind playing? Bless you, child! Who wants to play with people who play because they 'don't mind playing'? I can see that game now! 'What's trumps?' 'Whose play is it?' 'I thought I had played!' 'I must have reniged as I find I have a heart, after all.' No, no! When I play cards, I want the game made up of devotees. How would you like a partner in the dance who danced merely out of good-nature and kept forgetting whether he was dancing the schottische or mazurka?"

As no one had danced either of those obsolete dances for at least thirty years, the girls could not help a few sly smiles.

How rapidly that first week had flown! They had settled now into regular camp life, even Miss Somerville. She had secretly decided that Nature was not half bad and had once found herself admiring a sunset. She had kept her admiration to herself, however, for fear some over-zealous

person might make her get up and see a sunrise.

Oscar and Susan, with Gwen doing the head work, had managed the cooking beautifully for the few people they had to serve. It remained to be seen how things would go when the boarders poured in for the week-end.

Pour in they did, six more than the girls had prepared for; but Lewis and Bill with their ready inventions made beds for the boys of spruce boughs, and immediately put in an order for more cots and an extra tent.

There were two careful mammas who had come along to look after their daughters and an old bachelor who had a niece in tow; so Cousin Lizzie made up her table of bridge and every one was happy, especially the daughters of the careful mammas and the niece who was in tow. If one must be chaperoned, it is certainly pleasant to have the chaperone interested in something besides chaperoning.

The Mountain Goat made three round trips to the station to meet passengers on the afternoon train on that first Friday, and other enthusiastic

campers walked up the mountain. Josephus was very busy with a cart full of bags and bundles. One of the stipulations that the girls had made in their advertisements was that every one must bring his or her own blankets. This was at the instigation of Dr. Wright, who said it would be very difficult to furnish blankets enough; and also for sanitary reasons he knew it to be wise. Sheets are easy to have washed, but blankets are not so simple a proposition.

The twenty week-enders were all young with the exception of the two careful mammas, the old bachelor with the niece in tow, and two stiff-backed spinsters who must have had some good reason of their own for coming to camp in the mountains but they did not give it. They looked very grim and uncompromising as they sat on the back seat of the Goat with a plump and pleasing little stenographer, who was to take her much-needed holiday at the camp, wedged in between them.

"They must be geologists," whispered Douglas to Lewis. Douglas and Lucy had gone to the

station to meet the newcomers, while Helen and Nan were to receive them at camp. "One of them had a little hammer sticking out of her pocket."

"Well, let's hope they will keep their hammers for rocks and not knock the camp with them."

"Do you know, I did an awfully foolish thing? I put Tillie Wingo on the front seat with Bill and forgot to introduce them. Helen would never have done such a tactless thing."

"Well, a small thing like an introduction here or there won't stop Tillie. I bet she talks poor Bill blue in the face," laughed Lewis.

So she did. Miss Hill, the pleasant stenographer, told Helen that not for one moment did Tillie stop talking on that zig-zag ride up the mountain. She poured forth a stream of delightful high-pitched nothings into Bill's crimson ear. Bill, as was his habit, said nothing, and, like the tar baby, kept on saying nothing. She had his ear; his eye must perforce remain on the perilous road; his tongue was his to hold, and he held it. Once he let forth a great laugh which had the

effect of shutting Tillie up for almost thirty seconds; but it was not time to go to sleep yet and Tillie was accustomed to talk until she went to sleep and sometimes even afterwards.

"A week-end camp is a most original idea and every one in Richmond is simply wild about it. You see, the Carters are very popular and if they decide to do something, lots of people will want to be doing it, too. Helen Carter is considered the best dressed girl in Richmond, not that she dresses more than any of the other girls but she has such good taste. All of us girls are wild about her clothes. I adore camping! I'd join the Camp-Fire but somehow khaki is not becoming to me. Do you know, I do not think that muddy tan is becoming to decided blondes—not that I am such a very decided blonde. I know lots of girls who wear it who are not near so highly colored as I am—but somehow I think tan takes all the life out of a blonde. Of course, one can wear white up close to the face, but even then the tan kind of ruins a blonde complexion. I prefer blue and pink and lavender and green and, of

course, yellow, and I think grey is just sweet for a blonde. I am wild for a black dress but my mother is so old-fashioned she thinks no one under thirty should wear black unless, of course, there happens to be a death in the family. Under those circumstances, I fancy she would let me wear black. I would not wear heavy mourning but just some diaphanous, gauzy thing with tulle —although I do think that organdy collars and cuffs set one off terrifically well. I think I would make a splendid widow—don't you?"

It was here that Bill gave his great guffaw, but it was also at a particularly ticklish place in the road, so he could not look at his blonde passenger.

Tillie stopped for the aforesaid thirty seconds and then decided that the dumb young man running the car was a common chauffeur and perhaps she had better change her form of conversation to one not suggesting equality. It never entered her head to stop talking.

"Richmond is just running over with jitneys now. They make such a dust you can't see

whether they are coming or going. Did you ever run a jitney? They say there is lots of money in them. I should think you would do better doing that than doing this—of course, though, you know best, and perhaps you get your board thrown in up here. Mamma said she knew that the Carter girls would not know how to feed people because they have always led such soft lives, but I said I was coming, anyhow. I am dying to fall off. I really should have walked up the mountain instead of riding as that would be a good way to start, but I had on my best shoes and I knew it would ruin them. Douglas Carter wrote me to be sure and bring a blanket, but I simply could not get one in my grip and I said I would sleep cold before I would be seen carrying a great old blanket over my arm like lots of these people. It was horribly hot in Richmond and I did not think it could be cold coming just this little way. I think it is so brave and noble for the Carter girls to try to help their father this way. They do say he is dippy and was quite wild-eyed. I have a friend who was on the sleeper with Mr. and Mrs.

Carter when they went to New York, and he says they shut themselves up in the drawing room and acted awful queer. He didn't say just how, but it must have been something fierce. What is this funny looking place? Is this the camp? My, ain't it odd? I am very much obliged to you for bringing me up. Please look after my suitcase for me—it is the large one, really a small trunk, but I had no idea of mashing my new pink into a pulp just for the sake of reducing my luggage. Here, this is for you—and please get my baggage," and Tillie handed the astonished Bill a quarter.

"Didn't know what to say, so I just took it," Bill told Lewis afterward. "First money I've earned since I was a kid and picked blackberries for Grandmother to jam, at five cents a quart. Dog, if I would not rather pick the berries, briars and all! I felt like hollering to somebody to throw something over the cage, that the canary was making such a fuss I couldn't think."

Josh, too, was the victim of tips but he indig-

nantly returned the money that was proffered him with this remark:

"We uns ain't beholden to nobody, but is employed regular by Mr. Somerville, we uns and Josephus."

That is often the spirit of the mountaineer. He will sell anything but cannot stomach a tip.

Helen and Nan received the guests as they piled out of the Mountain Goat or came up the winding road on foot. It was a very exciting moment for our girls. This was really the beginning of their great adventure. Were they to succeed or not? The week-enders were there, for once at least, but could these girls make it so agreeable that they would want to come back?

"Do look at Tillie Wingo, Nan! Did you ever see such a goose? She has on ten dollar champagne shoes and a blue Georgette crêpe that would melt in a mist!"

"Yes, she is some goose, but she will pay us just as sensible board as anybody else, so we must not be too critical," and Nan went forward to meet the pretty blonde Tillie and the stiff-

backed spinsters and the pleasant Miss Hill, and Helen smothered her indignation at Tillie's bad taste in being so unsuitably dressed for camping and did her best to make it pleasant for her, Georgette crêpe, champagne shoes and all.

There was much enthusiasm from the new arrivals as they inspected the camp. Every one went into ecstasies over the view and the arrangements. Miss Somerville awaited them in the pavilion, where she stood as at a reception, receiving the guests with great formality.

"These young persons must understand fully that I am the chaperone, and I think a dignified reception of them will be conducive to good behavior on their part," she had said to Helen as she dressed herself in a black silk afternoon gown and arranged her beautiful white hair in its shining puffs.

At Gwen's instigation, afternoon tea was served as soon as the formal reception was over —tea for those so inclined and grape-juice-lemonade for the more frivolous.

A card table was unfolded for Miss Somer-

ville, the two anxious mothers and the old bachelor with a niece in tow.

"Quite like the springs," whispered Cousin Lizzie to Helen, as she got brand new packs of cards for the opening game of the season.

Our girls had thought they would have to be quite busy entertaining the week-enders, but they found to their delight that they could entertain themselves. There were more than enough of the male element to go around and in an incredibly short time they had sorted themselves to their mutual satisfaction and were either dancing to the latest record, which Tillie Wingo had put in her bursting semi-trunk, in lieu of a blanket, or were roaming over the mountain side.

Lil Tate, Lucy's boon companion and schoolmate, had come and the two girls had gone off arm in arm, while Frank Maury, a callow youth of fifteen, walked shyly after them, hoping they would take him in their train and fearing every moment that they might. His hopes and fears were both realized and by supper time the three were sworn allies; Frank had determined to come

up the next week and bring Skeeter, his chum, and Lil had declared she was going to make her mother let her spend the whole summer with Lucy.

"Mamma's an awful 'fraid cat about me and just would come along. Thank goodness, she and Miss Somerville have got cards to occupy 'em and she has forgotten there isn't but one of me," laughed Lil, who was a sprightly little brunette. "I wisht I had been born triplets and then she wouldn't have to be so particular."

"Gee, I'm glad I ain't a girl—but I like girls a lot—" stammered Frank. "Skeeter and I think they are just great," and so they chattered on.

Bobby was not so happy. His friend Josh was too busy with Josephus and the luggage to have him around, and no boon companion had arrived for him. He had been made to wash and dress, which, he considered, was a great breach of faith on the part of his sisters. He had it firmly placed in his memory that he had been promised by some one that when he got to the mountains he would never have to wash and dress. He sat

with a very disconsolate mien in a corner of the pavilion, watching Tillie's pretty little feet in their champagne shoes twirling round and around, every few moments with another pair of masculine shoes accompanying them, as Tillie was never long without a flock of the opposite sex in her wake. She could hardly get around the pavilion before the dance was broken into by some eager swain. She was noted as being able to dance down more partners than any girl in Richmond, and it was slyly hinted that she was so long-winded because of her never ceasing practice in conversation.

Bobby looked gloomily at the twinkling feet. They were too clean for him, those champagne-colored shoes. His own feet were disgustingly clean, too. Maybe he could rectify that with a judicious sprinkling of grape juice and then some clay sifted over them. He would try! Just then the stiff-backed spinsters, who turned out to be educators off on a botanical and geological spree, bore down on him and seating themselves on each side of him began:

"Little boy, are you enjoying your stay in the mountains?"

"Naw!"

"Ah, perhaps you are too idle and need occupation. Can you read and write?"

"Naw, I can't read writin' but I can read readin'."

"You should have a task set you every day and then vacation would not hang so heavily on your hands. Some useful bit of information imparted to you would be edifying and useful."

"Pshaw! That's the way Cousin Lizzie talks. She's our chapel roan an' knows mo'n anybody 'bout Solomon an' all his glory. She done learnt me a verse already onct this mornin'."

"Ah, indeed! And can you repeat it to us?"

"Yes! I reckon 'twas the grape juice an' victrola that made her choose this one: 'Wine is a mucker an' strong drink is rag time.' I kin learn mos' anything," and Bobby hastened off to put the clay on his feet before the grape juice bath had time to dry.

CHAPTER XV.

LETTERS FROM WEEK-END CAMP.

From Tillie Wingo to Her Best Friend Grace.

Greendale, Va.
Saturday Morning.

My darling Grace:

Such a time as we are having—I've almost danced up my new ten dollar shoes, but I am sure glad I wore them as they have been much admired. There are oodlums of men up here and some of the prettiest dancers I have ever met.

I must tell you what a terrible break I made. There is a man here named Bill Tinsley, and do you know I took him for a jitney driver the first day I got here and gave him a tip—twenty-five cents. He took it like a mutt and now he has a hole in it and wears it around his neck and everybody thinks it is an awful joke on me. I must say that it is hard to tell one kind of man from another when nobody introduces you. He is awful dum but dances like Volinine. He never opens his face except to feed it and to laugh and he laughs louder and more than anybody I have ever met before.

Speaking of feeding, the eats are fine. I don't see how the Carter girls ever learned how to do it but they have the best things! I hoped it

would be bum as I want to fall off. I have always been a perfect thirty-six and must say I don't relish taking on flesh, but I can't resist fried chicken and waffles.

I am almost sorry I brought my new pink as I really need some kind of outing dress, but I did not have room for so many things and I do think that it is best to have plenty of dancing frocks rather than sport suits that after all do not become me very much.

We have chaperones to burn as Miss Elizabeth Somerville is here and Mrs. Tate may stay a long time so Lil can be here with Lucy Carter. I am dying to stay but $2.00 per is right steep for yours truly. I don't think that is much for what you get and I think the Carter girls are real smart to charge a good price as long as they are giving you good things. Helen Carter does a lot of the cooking and has the sweetest little bungalow aprons to cook in. They are pink and blue, just my style, and when I get a trousseau I intend to have one.

We danced last night until eleven and then old Miss Somerville made all of us go to bed. She couldn't see to play cards was the reason she was so proper. Little dinky kerosene lamps that blow out in the wind are not much for card playing but they do fine for dancing. The boys say they are going to bring up some electric lanterns the next week-end so the old lady can see to play and she will forget the time.

Did you ever sleep in a tent, Grace? Well, it is great—I was real sorry I didn't have a blanket when it blew up so cold. It was right down

nippy. I wasn't going to say a thing but I was sorry I hadn't even brought a sweater—one of the fellows didn't have a blanket either but I heard him say he was going to sleep in his clothes. A blue Georgette crêpe and a pink chiffon wouldn't help me much and all of my clothes are diaphanous this summer. I am sharing a tent with two old maids and a sten from Richmond. Do you know when I went to my tent I found six blankets on my cot and Susan the maid brought me two more? It had got out among the men that I didn't have a blanket, how I can't imagine, and they sent me theirs. Now wasn't that too sweet of them? I sent them all back but a lovely cadet blue—it was so becoming I chose that. It turned out to be Mr. Tinsley's so I believe he is not mad about the tip I gave him.

We are going on a walk this morning over to a terrible place called the Devil's Gorge. I am going to wear Lucy Carter's shoes and Nan's skirt and Helen's middy blouse and Douglas has a hat for me. The sten in the tent with me lent me some stockings. You see I brought nothing but silk ones. After we got to bed last night and I was almost asleep but was talking to the sten, who is a very nice agreeable girl—the old maids were both snoring—we heard a car chugging up the hill and it seems two more men had arrived, motored all the way from Richmond. It was a Dr. Wright and a boy named Dick. I heard Helen Carter, in the next tent, just raising Cain and saying he was very inconsiderate to come in on them at night that way, but before they could so much as get up to see where they were to sleep,

they got a message that the new comers had brought their own blankets and hammocks and no one was to stir for them. I met Dr. Wright at breakfast and I think he is real cute. Helen Carter is mighty rude to him and I can't see how he stands it. Helen has lovely manners usually but she certainly does pick him up quick. He is a general favorite with the rest of the family though, and Bobby is just wild about him. No more at present. I don't see how I ever wrote this much as there has been a lot of noise and I know ten times I have been begged to stop writing and come dance. It looks like rain but I do hope it won't. My blue will melt I know if it rains.

Your best friend,
TILLIE WINGO.

Skeeter from Frank Maury.

Hello Skeeter!

Come in, the water's fine! Say, Skeeter, what's the reason you can't light right out and come up to camp? Be sure and bring a blanket, the nights are cold as flugians. Miss Douglas Carter says that they call it a week-end camp just for cod, but we can stay through the week if we've a mind. Bully eats and plenty of 'em, and say, Skeeter, two mighty prime girls—no nonsense about them but spunky and up to snuff. They are named Lucy Carter and Lil Tate. They say they'd like to meet you a lot. If you come we can play five hundred when we are not climbing the mountains and hunting bee trees.

Lucy has some chores she has to do but Lil and I help and we get through in a jiffy. It is just fun. I talk like I been here a month and it is just one night. Anyhow, Lil and I helped this morning and we are going to do it every morning. You see, these Carter girls are running this camp for the spondulix they can get out of it and it means all of them have got to spit on their hands and turn in. Lucy has to help wipe the dishes when they have many folks. I blew in the glasses and polished them so fine that Miss Helen said she would like to hire me. I ain't going to tell you more of the camp because I am sure you will be here yourself soon. It beats the beach all hollow. These girls are sure slick, these Carter girls. They have a camp fire going all the time to make it look al frescoish, but they do their cooking mostly on stoves and in fireless cookers. They roast the potatoes in the camp fire and bring them to the table with ashes on 'em to make 'em look more campyfied; and they have a big iron pot hanging over the fire but they never have anything in it but water. Say, Skeeter, when you come, bring your fish lines as there is a stream that looks like fish. Let a fellow know when to look for you.

Yrs. truly,

FRANK MAURY.

Susan Jourdan to Melissa Thompson, the former cook at the Carters'.

Dere ant Melisser?

i am sogournin hear most profertably to all consearned. me and uncle Oscur is took over the

Brunt of the laber but the yung ladys is very konsiderable of us and all of them healps at every chanst. miss Helun is astonishun in her caperbilitys, morn what we thort posserble. We had upwards of thirty last night for super and it took a sight of vittles to fill them folks. We want countin on morn twenty-four and want countin' on them eatin quite so much but miss Helun took holt and stirred up some batty kates and got em started to fryin befoar the waffles give out and all the folks turned in then and et batty kates like they aint never already filled up on waffles. White folks are sure quick to think in times of stress. Niggers jest lay down and give up when anything suddint turns up like extry stomiks but white gals aint nocked out by sich things. Now uncle Oscur and me would have to know long time befoar han about batty kates but miss Helun just waltzed in and made em. it war the las think they learnt her to make at the XYWZ whar she tuck a coarse in culminary cookin. Theys a yung lady here named miss Guen who is a mistery to me and uncle Oscur. she is bar futed and dressed in a dress no biggern a flower sax but she talks properern miss Lizy sumervil and hoalds up her haid ekal to mis Carter herself, she is a gret han at cookin and shen Me together kin git up a sweet meel. She was floared by the Nos. last nite tho and shen Me was bout givin up when miss Helun stept in. miss Helun looks Sweet in her bugaboo apern i think dr. Right thinks so too but when he started to say something to her bout it she pritty near bit his haid off. she is got it in for him good and wright but the others is dafty

bout Him and Bobby thinks he is the angle Gabrul hisself. I aint writ you bout a low flung mounting boy up hear what put a hornets nest under my baid the fust nite we sogourned hear. he is impruved now because of mr. Lewis who sayed his say to Him and thin made him take a bath when it want morn Chewsday. We gits along with him by gittin out of his Way. Ill give it to him that he is smart enuf and kin work. He is got strange notions tho and whin some of the compny handed him a little change for his trouble in totin up they bags he got insulted. uncle Oscur and I says we would like some of them insults heeped on us. no more from yours in haste at preasant. I dreemed bout teeth last nite wich is sure sine of death but miss Nan sayed it was because i sleapt with a wad of chueing gum in my mouth and it sprung my Gaw and maid my teeth ake. we are xpecting a large Crowd for the 4th of july. it air a strange thing to me that white folks should make so mutch noise on the day that our rase was given its freedom. The folks is all lawd in prase of my biskit which is no trubble at all to roll out. the yung folks is all gone on a walk what they calls a hyke. They is going to a fearsum spot known as the devilsgorge. twas there that miss Guens paw made way with his life. miss Guen and i is to serve lunch for miss Lizzie sumervil and some ladies and a gent who is too crepit to hyke. They is endorsed in cards and done forgot to chapperroon. thaint none here what needs watching. that pretty miss Tillie wingo is mighty flity but thaint no meanness in her. the bows act like

beas round a honie pot with her. She don't talk nothin but fulishnes and gigglin but men fokes is sometimes took with that sawt of tainment. miss Nan done say she thinks twould be good bizness if they ask miss Tillie to stay on as a gest. She earns her keep and weakenders will come here jest cause of her. miss Duglas say so too but miss Helun says let her stay but make her get sum sootable duds as shes got no i dear of lending her her noo accordeonroy skurt perchused specally for the mountings and she sayed she seen miss Tillie eying it with Mutt Ise. I am enjoyn poar helth and hope it finds you the same.

respeect.

SUSAN JOURDAN.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HIKE.

You could plainly see the Devil's Gorge from Camp Carter, that is, you could see a dent in the neighboring mountain, and no one but Josh knew that it was two hours' steady walking to that purplish dimple. Two hours' steady walking is not possible with twenty-odd persons, and so it took nearer four to reach the end of their journey. There were many pauses to rest and to tie shoe strings and refresh themselves at gurgling springs. Josh led the way with Josephus as pack mule, the lunch strapped on his back and Bobby perched on top like a Great Mogul.

Josephus was at a great disadvantage as his short fore leg was down hill. "Never mind, he'll play thunder goin' back," Josh consoled himself and Bobby, who had to sit very carefully to keep from falling off on the down side. Josephus

limped cheerfully on as though there were nothing he enjoyed more than a hike where he was allowed to carry the lunch.

"He is such a cheerful old mule that I just know if he had been born a canary bird he would be singing all the time," declared Nan. "I think he has a most enviable disposition."

"Yes, his disposition is more to be envied than his job," suggested one of the party.

"Never mind, we will lighten his load for him before we return. I am starved."

"Who is it that is hungry?"

"Me, me!" from so many mouths that the educating spinsters' precise "I, I," was lost in the avalanche of me's.

Those worthy ladies were in a seventh heaven of bliss. They had found many botanical specimens which they pounced upon for future analysis, and their little hammers were going whack! whack! at every boulder that poor Josephus stumbled over. They were really very nice and kind, and as for their backbones, it was not their fault that they had pokers instead of vertebrae.

The Devil's Gorge was worth the long walk, even to those who had no hammers. Great rocks were piled high on top of one another and all down the mountain side was an enormous crack in solid rock.

"Geewhiz! Something must have been doing here once to make such a mess," declared Lewis Somerville.

"Just look at that great rock balanced there on that little one! It would take just a push to send it clattering down. To think that one great heave of Mother Earth must have sent it up, and there it has been just as it is for centuries!" said Douglas.

"Well, we uns bets Mr. Bill could send it over with one er his side splitters." And with that from Josh, Bill gave a sample of his laugh that did not dislodge the great boulder but made Tillie Wingo stop talking for a whole minute.

"You uns ain't lowing to eat here, is you uns?" asked Josh rather plaintively.

"Well, this is a pretty good place," suggested Dr. Wright, who had found a pleasant companion

in Miss Hill although he had made some endeavor at first to walk beside Helen. But that young lady swished her cold-gravy corduroy skirt by him and refused to be walked beside. Helen was looking particularly charming on that day, although she could but confess to herself that she was a little tired. Making sandwiches for such a lot of persons was no joke, and she had been at it for hours before they started on the hike. She had had plenty of helpers, but sandwiches were her particular stunt and she had had a finger in every one.

Dr. Wright's last glimpse of Helen as she had sat in the coach of the moving train, telling a truly true made-up story to Bobby, had remained a very pleasant picture in his mind. He had decided that there was a lot of sweetness in the girl and certainly a great deal of cleverness and charm—if she would only not feel that her thorny side was the one always to be presented to him. When he had handed her the aromatic ammonia for Douglas and she had thanked him so sweetly, he had felt that surely the hatchet was buried be-

tween them and now they were to be friends. He had been thinking of her a good deal during the past week and had quite looked forward to the possibility of becoming better acquainted with her.

Helen had really meant to be nice, but on the young doctor's arrival a spirit of perverseness had seized her and she had her thorns all ready to prick him whenever he approached her, hoping for some share of the sweetness she could lavish on others: on Bobby, for instance. That youngster always declared Helen was his favorite sister, and there was never a time when Bobby was too dirty or too naughty for Helen to think he was not the sweetest and most kissable thing in the world. As Bobby's conversation when he was with his 'ployer was taken up a great deal with Helen, and vice versa, those two young persons perforce heard much of one another. Helen was grateful to Dr. Wright for his kindness to Bobby and at the same time was a little jealous of Bobby's affection and admiration for him.

"It isn't like me," she would argue to herself, "but somehow this man seems always to be putting me in the wrong, and now he even has Bobby loving him more than he does me, and as for the girls—they make me tired!"

That very morning when they were dressing for the hike and she was putting on her cold-gravy corduroy skirt, grey pongee shirtwaist and grey stockings and canvas shoes—all thought out with care even to the soft grey summer felt hat and the one touch of color: a bright red tie knotted under the soft rolling collar—she had been irritated almost to a point of tears because Nan, who was all ready, came running back into the tent to put on some khaki leggins because Dr. Wright said it would be wise to wear them, as a place like the Devil's Gorge was sure to be snaky. Douglas and Lucy had done the same thing and had wanted her to.

"Indeed I won't! How did he happen to be the boss of this camp? His power of attorney does not extend to me, I'll have him know! Besides, do you think I am going to ruin the whole effect

of my grey costume with those old mustard colored leggins? Not on your life!"

"Helen is very tired; that's what makes her so unreasonable," Nan had whispered to Douglas as they left the tent to Helen and her costume. "She has worked so hard all morning on the sandwiches. When I finished the deviled eggs, I wanted her to let me help, but she wouldn't."

"Yes, I know. I was so busy in the tents, making up cots and straightening up things, that I had to leave it all to you and Helen, but I thought Gwen and Susan were there to help."

"So they were, but Susan has a slap dash way of making sandwiches that does not appeal to Helen, and while Gwen is very capable, she cannot take the initiative in anything unless she has been taught it at school. The next time we make sandwiches she will do it much better. She was so anxious to make them just right that she was slower than Brer Tarripin."

"I asked Gwen to go with us this morning, but she shrank back in such horror at the mention of the Devil's Gorge that I realized I had been cruel,

indeed, to speak of the place to her. That's where her father killed himself, you know."

"Yes, poor girl! Doesn't it seem strange that there were no papers of any sort found to show where he came from?"

Just then Dr. Wright joined them and they told him of the little English girl and how her father had killed himself and how, there being no papers to show that he had made a payment on the mountain property, Old Dean, the country storekeeper, had foreclosed at the Englishman's death and the property had later been given to their father in payment of a debt Dean owed him for services in rebuilding the hotel at Greendale, also owned by Dean.

"Aunt Mandy says it was only about a thousand dollars in all," explained Douglas, "and she was under the impression that Mr. Brown had paid cash for the land, but he was so reticent no one knew much about him and old Dean said that he had never paid anything. Of course Dean is the rich member of the community and gives them credit at his store, so all the mountain-

eers are under his thumb, more or less. Father got only half the land."

When Helen appeared, she fancied Dr. Wright looked disapprovingly at her because of her leggingless state, but on the contrary he was thinking what a very delightful looking person she was and never even thought of leggins. He only thought how nice it would be if she would permit him to walk by her side and hold back the low hanging branches and briars so that her bright, animated face would escape the inevitable scratches that attend a hike in the mountains. He liked the way she walked, carrying her head and shoulders in rather a gallant way. He liked the sure-footed way she stepped along in her pretty grey canvas ties. He liked the set and hang of her corduroy skirt and the roll of the soft collar of her shirt—above all, he liked the little dash of red at her throat. She reminded him of a scarlet tanager, only they were black, and she was grey, grey like a dove—but there was certainly nothing dovelike about her, certainly nothing meek or cooing as she swished by him.

No one laughed more or chattered more than Helen did on that hike, not even Tillie Wingo herself, the queen bee of laughers and chatterers; but Nan noticed that the last mile of their walk her sister's carriage was not nearly so gallant, and Dr. Wright noticed that the scarlet of her tie was even more brilliant because of an unwonted paleness of her piquant face. He tapped his breast pocket to be sure that the tiny medicine case he always carried with him was safe.

"You never can tell what will happen when a lot of youngsters start off on a hike, and it is well to have 'first aid to the injured' handy," he had said to himself.

"Wal, if you uns is lowing to eat here, reckon we uns will drive Josephus round the mounting a bit. We uns feels like it's a feedin' the Devil and starvin' God to eat in sech a spot," and Josh prepared to unload his mule after he had assisted Bobby to the ground.

"Oh, please don't eat here," begged Nan, "this is where the Englishman died."

"Where? Where?" the others demanded, and

Josh, nothing loath to tell the dramatic incident and emboldened by the crowd and broad daylight, when hants were powerless, told again the tale of the man with the sad, tired face who was always trying to get away from the ringing and roaring in his head; how he had drifted into Greendale and bought the land with the cabin on it from old Dean and taken his little girl up there where they had lived about two years; and then how one night he had not come home, and Gwen had come to their cabin early in the morning to ask them to hunt her father, and after long search they had found him down in the Devil's Gorge—dead.

"Dead's a door nail and Gwen left 'thout so much as a sho 'nuf name, 'cause the Englishman allus called hisself Brown, but the books what Gwen fetched to we allses' house is got another name writ in 'em, an' my maw, she says that Gwen's jes' as likely to be named one as tother. My maw says that she don't hold to the notion that the Englishman took his own life, but that was what the coroner said—susanside—an' ac-

cordin' to law we uns is bleeged to accept his verdict."

"I agree with your mother," said Dr. Wright. "It is more apt to have been vertigo that toppled the poor man over. That ringing in the head is so often accompanied with vertigo."

They carried the provisions around the mountain, out of sight of the gruesome spot, and under a mighty oak tree ate their very good luncheon.

CHAPTER XVII.

FIRST AID.

"It is strange we haven't seen a single snake," said one of the visiting girls.

"Thank goodness for it!" exclaimed another. "I was almost afraid to come camping because of snakes."

"We haven't seen any around the camp at all," Douglas assured them.

Bill and Lewis exchanged sly glances, for the truth of the matter was they had killed several in the early days when they were breaking ground for the pavilion—had killed and kept mum on the subject.

"Girls are just as afraid of dead snakes as alive ones, so let's keep dark about them," Lewis had said, and they had also sworn Josh to secrecy.

"There is one thing to be remembered about snakes," said Dr. Wright, "most snakes, at least,

that they are as afraid of you as you are of them and they are seldom the aggressors; that is, they do not consider themselves so. They strike when they think that you have encroached on their trail. If you look carefully where you walk, there is no danger ever of being bitten by a snake, and very few snakes will come deliberately where you are. I will wager anything that Josh here has never stepped on a snake."

"We uns done it onct but Maw lambasted we uns with a black snake whip fer not lookin' whar we uns trod, so's ain't never had no accident since. Maw, she said if the har of a dog was good fer the bite, that a black snake whip would jest about cure we uns fer most gittin' bit by a rattler."

"Oh, he didn't bite you, then?"

"Naw, 'cause we uns war jes up from the measles an' Maw had put some ole boots on we uns. Maw says that the best cure for snake bite is to have the measles an' wear ole boots so you uns don't git bit."

"Very sound reasoning," laughed Dr. Wright.

"In the mountains, top boots or leggins would cure all snake bites."

"Helen wouldn't wear her leggins," declared Bobby, "'cause she said you couldn't come attorney-generaling her about her clothes, and mustard don't help cold gravy none, anyhow."

"Oh, Bobby!" gasped Helen.

"So it won't, Bobby," said Dr. Wright, somewhat mystified as to the hidden meaning of mustard and cold gravy but feeling sure that there was some significance in it. He did not interpret it as did Mrs. Bardell the cryptic notes from Mr. Pickwick concerning tomato sauce as being love messages, but well knew that they were more nearly proofs of dislike if not hate from Helen.

"Nothing can help cold gravy in my opinion," drawled Nan, "not even heating it up."

"How about cold shoulders?" asked the doctor.

"Or icy mits?"

"Or glacial reserve?"

"Or chilling silence?" Suggestions from different ones of the picnickers.

"What will melt frigid replies?"

"Or frozen glances?"

"Hot air!" from Bill. "Melt anything." And then he gave a laugh at his own wit that bid fair to dislodge the great rock so delicately balanced in the Devil's Gorge.

"Let's go explore the Devil's Gorge now!" suggested Helen, springing to her feet, forgetting all about her fatigue, only thankful for the foolishness that had been started by Nan to hide her sister's embarrassment. What would Dr. Wright think of her? He must have understood very well what Bobby meant by attorney-generaling, if the mustard and cold gravy was a mystery.

The girls held back when they looked down the frightful abyss so well named, but the spinster educators went on, determined to get geological specimens if they died for it, and Helen, in a spirit of bravado, leaped ahead of the exploring party and sprang down the rocks like a veritable mountain goat. Her cheeks were still glowing over the remarks of that enfant terrible, Bobby.

"Be careful, Helen!" called Lewis Somerville, who had constituted himself squire of spinsters

and was helping those intrepid geologists down the slippery rocks. Helen tossed her head at her cousin and went on in her mad descent, swinging from rock to rock with the occasional help of a scrub oak that had somehow gained foothold on the barren boulders.

"Look out for snakes, Helen!" cried Douglas, who had turned back with the rest of the party.

But Helen heeded nothing and seemed bent on reaching the lowest point of the chasm. It flashed across her mind that she was a little like the Englishman. He was trying to escape from the buzzing and roaring in his head while she was in a mad race with her conscience. Why should she be so unkind and sharp with Dr. Wright? She didn't know.

She could hear the people above talking and their voices seemed thin and far away, so deep had she penetrated into the gorge.

"Jest a leetle below whar Miss Helen is standing was whar they picked up the Englishman," she could hear Josh's peculiar mountain voice recite before the party moved off back toward the

temporary camp where they had had luncheon. The ladies on science bent, their squire, Dr. Wright and she were the only explorers left.

"Right down there is where that poor man fell," she said to herself. "I don't believe it was suicide, either," and then she blushed for agreeing with Dr. Wright. "But it would be so easy to fall from any of these slippery crags. He might have been on the opposite cliff, which is certainly a precarious spot, and vertigo might have attacked him, and he might have gone over backwards, clutching at the scrub oaks as he fell, and gone down, down—why, what is that hanging in the tree there?"

Something was certainly caught in the branches of a dwarf tree that clung to the unfriendly rocks with determined roots—something that looked like a wallet, but she could not be sure.

"Lewis!" she called, but Lewis was so taken up with hanging by his toes and reaching for a particularly rare specimen of fern that one of the

dames wanted for her collection, that he did not hear her calling.

"Will I do?" asked Dr. Wright from somewhere above her.

"Oh, no, I thank you. I don't want anything." And then the buzzing conscience started up and she said more cordially, "I see something hanging in a scrub oak over there that I am going to get."

"Let me get it for you," and the young doctor started to swing himself down the cliff to the ledge where Helen was standing.

Before he reached her, however, she had determined to make the attempt herself. It was not much of a jump for one as athletic as Helen. It was several feet below where she was standing and the gorge narrowed at that point, making little more than a step across to the opposite ledge.

She gave a flying leap and landed safely, clutching the scrub oak in whose branches the wallet was lodged. Dr. Wright reached the spot where she had been standing just as she touched the rock below. He could not help admiring her

grace and athletic figure as she made the jump, although his heart was sore at her persistent unkindness to him. He did not want to find her attractive and determined to let this visit to the camp be his last. She seemed to think that he had courted the power of attorney that had been thrust upon him, or why should she have said whatever she had said that had caused Bobby's prattling? It was thoroughly ungenerous of her and unkind and he for one was not going to place himself in a position to have to endure it. The other members of the family were so very nice to him that he did not relish letting the summer go by without visiting them again—and Bobby—dear little shover. He could but confess, however, that their kindness was outweighed in his heart by Helen's unkindness, and he determined to stay away.

A second after Helen had made her triumphant leap, she gave a sharp cry. Dr. Wright started toward her and his keen gaze saw an ugly snake gliding away across the rocks, disappearing in a crevice.

"My God, Helen! Did he bite you?" No bitterness now was in the young man's heart as he jumped the chasm and landed by Helen's side, just as she sank trembling to the ground.

She said afterwards it was not because it hurt so much, only for a moment was the pain intense, but she felt a kind of horror as though the poison had penetrated her very soul. She was filled with fear that could only have been equalled by Susan's dread of hants.

"Where is it?" the doctor questioned with a voice of such sympathy and tenderness that Helen's thoughts went back to a time in her childhood when she had her tonsils removed. When she came from under the anesthetic, her father was holding her hand and he spoke to her in just such a tone.

"My heel! Just above the shoe!" she gasped.

"Take off your shoe and stocking as quick as you can."

She obeyed without question and Dr. Wright, with a deftness surprising in a man, twisted a handkerchief around her ankle just above the in-

jured spot, and so tightly did he bind it, that it was all Helen could do to keep from crying out.

"I know it hurts, but we have to bear it."

His "we" made her feel in some way that it hurt him, too. But what was he doing? Without a word he had knelt and had his mouth to the wound and was sucking out the poison.

Helen hid her face in her hands. It took only a moment and then the kind voice said: "Now we have a little more to stand." He quickly opened his miniature case and, handing her a tiny phial, told her to take two of the pellets, which she did, while he got out a small hard alcohol lamp and lighted it. Then, producing the proper instruments from the wonderful case, he proceeded to cauterize the wound. Helen gritted her teeth and made not one murmur.

"Your father's own daughter," was all he said as he put up his instruments, but that was as music in the ears of Helen. He then produced a small bottle from another pocket and washed out his own mouth with a thoroughness that explained his exceedingly perfect teeth.

"The wound is a very slight one and I truly believe you will have absolutely no trouble, but you must take every precaution and be very quiet for a day or so. Lewis and I together will carry you up to Josephus. A snake bite can be of little consequence if it is taken hold of immediately. Can you stand the ligature a little tighter?"

"Ye—s!"

"Ah, I see it is tight enough. You can put your stocking on again, but first I must make assurance doubly sure and cut out a great hole where the rascal attacked you. There might be poison in it." He deftly bandaged the injured ankle with a roll of gauze he produced from yet another pocket, first treating the wound with iodine. "I wish I had some permanganate of potash but I fancy the work is already done and the iodine will be all right. He got you on the Achilles tendon. I wonder if it is your only vulnerable spot, too."

"No, it is not. I am full of vulnerable spots! Oh, Dr. Wright, I am not nearly so mean as I seem. I am so sorry I was so rude to you—I—I

am going to be better. I am sorry I did not wear the leggins and I am sorry I did not look where I was stepping—I am sorry I jumped over the gorge when I saw you coming. I just did it to irritate you. I am sorry to have caused you all this trouble and I am so grateful to you that I can hardly——" but here Helen actually blubbered, something that she never did.

"Why, you poor little girl! I haven't a doubt that I have been as horrid as you have thought I was and dictatorial and interfering and mean—and everything. Please forgive me and suppose we just be the good friends that somehow I believe we were cut out to be, you and Bobby and I;" and he took the girl's hand in his and patted it gently while she wept on.

"Can't you stop crying, honey?"

"I be—be—believe I could if I had a handkerchief, but I've lost mine."

"And mine is made into a ligature. Would a few yards of gauze help any?" And then they both laughed while he unwound the gauze.

All of this had taken but a few minutes and

Lewis and the scientific devotees had no idea that anything so terrifying as a snake bite was going on. They came in view just as Helen dried her eyes on the few yards of gauze.

"Hello! What's up?"

"Oh, Lewis, a snake bit me!"

"Gee! A rattler?"

Dr. Wright held up a warning finger behind Helen's back.

"He got out of the way so fast we did not get a good look at him, but it is not a bad bite, and everything has been done that could be done, and now Miss Helen is going to take one more of these little green pellets and you and I are going to carry her up to Josephus."

The ladies were very solicitous and anxious to do anything in their power, but they were calm and quiet and Helen thanked her stars that the rest of the party had gone back and not ventured so far into the gorge.

"It would have been awful to have them buzzing all around me, yelling and screaming and squealing," she said to herself, and then the

thought came to her of the horror all the girls had of snakes and the consternation her accident would cause among the week-enders. But why need they know? It was her own fault that she had been bitten, and such a thing need never happen again if only proper precautions were taken, such as leggins and looking where you stepped and keeping away from the Devil's Gorge, where snakes were sure to abound.

"Dr. Wright, do you think it would be possible to keep this thing perfectly quiet? I am so afraid that my being bitten by a snake would give our camp such a bad name that it would be a failure from now on."

"Of course it could be kept quiet. What do you think, Somerville?"

"Me! Why, I'm game to keep my mouth shut."

"We agree with you perfectly, Miss Carter, and will say nothing at all in regard to the accident," the spinsters assured her, and they looked so kind and sensible that Helen's heart was warmed to them and she wondered that she had

not noticed before what very intelligent, good faces both of them had.

"All right," said Dr. Wright, "it is perfectly ethical for a physician to keep his patient's malady to himself. Miss Helen Carter is suffering from an injury to her ankle. If the inquisitive choose to make of it a sprain it is their own affair. Now, Lewis, how shall we manage? It will be pretty awkward for us to make a basket of our hands going up this cliff," and with that he stooped and picked Helen up in his arms, and with no more exertion than if she had been Bobby, he made his way up the mountain.

"Would it hurt me to walk? I can't bear to be so much trouble."

"It is best to keep very quiet. I am pretty sure there is going to be no trouble, but I must have you behave just exactly as though there was."

"Lewis, you get Douglas off by herself and let her know what it was, but wait until we are back in camp. Tell her so she won't be scared, and let her know it is all right before you let her know what it is."

"Would it hurt me to walk? I can't bear to be so much trouble"—*Page* 258

"I believe the rattlesnake is called crotalus horridus," said one of the wise ladies.

Dr. Wright wished she would stop talking about snakes and especially rattlers, as he wanted to get Helen's mind off the terrifying occurrence.

"We are not sure this was a rattlesnake," he said.

"I think it was," she whispered to him. "I remember as I jumped I heard something that sounded like dry leaves." Did the young man hold her closer to him or was it just a fancy on her part?

"It knocks me all up to think about it," he muttered. "I am glad, so glad I followed you."

"I am, too!"

A wave of crimson flooded the young man's face. He didn't know why, but his blood was singing in his veins and his breath came quickly. If it had not been for the presence of the respectable spinsters, he was sure he would have had to kiss that piquant face so close to his.

"Come on, Doc, my time now to take up the white man's burden. Helen is no featherweight

and you are red in the face and panting from carrying her this far."

"Not a bit of it!" and Dr. Wright held on to his burden while Lewis endeavored to relieve him.

"Well, let's cut the baby in two, like my Aunt's favorite character in history."

"If I give up, it will be for the same reason the woman in the Bible did," laughed Dr. Wright. "You remember it was the woman who had the right who gave up?"

The spinsters were still talking about the habits and customs of the horridus crotalus.

"They know so much and keep piling on so much more, I fancy if they didn't give out some of their learning, they would bust," whispered Lewis, as he grasped his cousin in a bear hug and started to finish the journey to the temporary camp.

"Do you remember a limerick, I think Oliver Hereford's?" asked Helen:

" 'There was once a homo teetotalus
Who stepped on a horridus crotalus,
"Hic!" clavit in pain,
"I've got 'em again!"
Ejacit this homo teetotalus.' "

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DIAGNOSIS.

There was a great outcry from the party when Helen appeared in the arms of Lewis with an ostentatious bandage on her ankle, so that the verdict of a sprain was established without the attending physician's having to perjure himself with a false diagnosis.

Helen was looking very pale and tired, and thankful indeed was she for the bony back of Josephus, that was destined to bear her home. She and Bobby both found room on the patient old mule, who started off with his usual bird-like spirit, seemingly proud of his fair burden.

"I am afraid we are too much for Josephus," Helen said to Josh.

"Naw'm! Josephus is proud to tote the likes of you allses. He is jes' a been tellin' we uns that he is thankful his short leg is up the mounting so Miss Helen will ride mo' easy like."

"Well, I'll give him some sugar when we get home," laughed Helen.

Dr. Wright kept close by the side of the mule wherever the trail permitted and once or twice held out his hand to feel the pulse of the patient. That is the danger of snake bite: that the pulse may become feeble. The old treatment of whisky, drunk in large quantities, is now thought to have been the cause of more deaths from snake bites than the bites themselves. Persons unaccustomed to liquor could not stand the large doses that were poured down them by well-meaning friends. The present day treatment is: strychnia to keep up the pulse and the thorough burning out of the wound, after it has been sucked by a healthy mouth.

A sprained ankle is nothing to dampen the spirits of youth and so the crowd went back as gaily as it came. Helen could not help thinking how differently they would have behaved had they known the true inwardness of her having to ride on the back of the mule that reminded her of nothing so much as a saw-horse. Had they un-

derstood that a rattlesnake had taken a nip out of her tendon Achilles, it would have put an end to their cheerfulness and also an end to their week-end boarders if she was not mistaken.

"Suppose it is going to do me as it did old Uncle Snake-bit Peter we used to see up at Wytheville," she said to herself, "with his leg all drawn up and shrivelled." She got giddy at the thought and then it was that Dr. Wright, who seemed to know exactly what was in her mind, put out his hand and felt her pulse and then gave her another tiny pellet. He looked so good and so dependable and seemed so confident that all was going well with her, she felt she must perforce have faith in him.

" 'I will look unto the hills from whence cometh my help,' " came to her lips, and she whispered the text softly.

"What is it?"

"Nothing," she blushed, "I was talking to myself."

"You were blowing down my neck," said Bobby, who was perched in front of her. "If

you were whiskering to me, I didn't hear what you said. 'Tain't perlite to whisker in comp'ny, and, 'sides, I always tell my 'ployer what you say 'bout him, anyhow."

Helen was silent. Would she ever be able to live down all the unkind things she had said about Dr. Wright? How could he be so nice to her? Of course, she understood that he had done what any physician would have done in treating the wound, although he might have called Lewis Somerville to do the extremely objectionable part of the process of cleaning the bite. Since Lewis was a cousin and in the mountains as protector to her and her sisters, it might have been up to him to render first aid, since the tendon Achilles is so situated that it would take a contortionist to administer treatment to oneself. If Dr. Wright had only done his duty as laid down in the code of medical ethics, he certainly had a wonderfully pleasing sick room manner and his patients must one and all give him praise for sympathy and understanding.

"Gwen done promised me'n Josh to have some

gingerbread made by the time we gits back from hiking," broke in Bobby. "I is a-hopin' that all this joltin' is gonter shake down my lunch some, 'cause sho's you's born I don't want what I done et. If Josephus stumbles agin I reckon my stomick will growl an' then I'm most sho' I kin hole a leetle mo' if it's gingerbread. Gwen kin make the bes'es' an' sof'es' an' blackes' gingerbread what I ever et."

At the mention of Gwen, Helen's thoughts went back to the Devil's Gorge where her father had met such a tragic end, and the wallet she had seen in the branches of the scrub oak tree flashed in her mind's eye.

"The wallet! The wallet! We forgot to get it out of the tree," she exclaimed.

"By Jove! So we did! Somehow, other things seemed more important."

"I wonder what it was. It might have been in the Englishman's pocket, and when he fell down the cliff, it might have got caught in the branches of the scrub oak. I wish I knew."

Camp looked very peaceful and homelike when

the hikers returned. The card players were still at it and seemed all unconscious of the lengthening shadows. Mrs. Tate took occasion while she was dummy to embrace her offspring and to suggest that she put witchhazel on her sunburned countenance. The bachelor uncle played through his no trump hand before he could assure himself of his niece's safety. Miss Lizzie Somerville had felt no uneasiness about the crowd, because was not her beloved Lewis taking care of them? She was somewhat concerned when she learned that her favorite among the girls had sprained her ankle but thanked her stars that it was only a sprain and not a snake bite or something terrible.

"I have a dread of snakes," she said as she stood over Helen in the tent where Dr. Wright had tenderly borne her, and where she lay on her cot, thankful indeed to be off the sharp back of Josephus and at rest on what was not exactly a luxurious bed but very comfortable to her tired bones. "It was a blessing that Dr. Wright was with you and could bind up your ankle so nicely. Does it pain you much, child?"

"No'm, not much! Not at all right now."

"Well, as I said before, I am thankful it was not a snake bite as I was sure none of you had carried whisky with you, and that is the only thing to use when a snake bites you, so I have always been told. No matter what your habits or convictions are, you must drink whisky if a snake bites you. Am I not right, doctor?"

"Well, whisky is better than nothing, but there are things that are better than whisky," smiled the young man, wishing that Miss Somerville would get away from the painful subject and realizing more than ever how wise Helen had been to conceal the real cause of her being out of the running. "Strychnia is the treatment of modern science, as it is more efficacious than whisky to keep up the pulse." He felt Helen's pulse while he was talking, which seemed to Miss Somerville rather unnecessary concern for a sprained ankle, and she went off murmuring to herself: "'There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea four, which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a ser-

pent upon a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid.' "

Douglas came in, white and scared. Lewis had broken the news to her as gently as possible, but the sound of snake bite was a terrible one to her young ears. She, too, remembered old Uncle Snake-bit Peter and his withered limb.

"Helen, Helen!" she cried and burst into tears.

"Why, Douglas, buck up! Dr. Wright says I am doing splendidly and there is nothing to fear. He did everything that could be done, and because he was right on the spot, it was attended to so quickly that the poison could not get into my system. I feel fine, and mean to be up a great deal sooner than I would if it had been just a common sprain. We must keep it dark, though, and not let a soul know it is anything but what they think it is."

Douglas was reassured by the calm confidence of the doctor and relieved, indeed, to see that Helen was meaning to obey him in everything.

"She had better stay perfectly quiet for several days just to be sure, and I will treat the poor heel

where I had to cauterize it. That will, of course, be sore for a while."

"All right," said Helen with unaccustomed meekness, "but I did think I might get up to-morrow. But I'll be good as I want to get well, perfectly well, so I can go to the Devil's Gorge again and get the wallet."

"But would you venture there again?"

"Certainly! But next time I'll wear high shoes and leggins and look where I step. I think I deserve some of Aunt Mandy's black snake whip as a punishment. I do wish I knew what was in that wallet—if it was a wallet."

The doctor smiled and left the tent to the sisters, who clung to each other with all the affection they had. They realized what they meant to one another more than they ever had before, now that this thing had occurred that might have proved very serious.

"We mustn't let a soul know what the trouble is, Douglas. Of course, you realize it would send our week-end boarders anywhere but to the mountains."

"Yes, I see it would, just the way they all talk about snakes. I tell you one thing, though—we must make leggins obligatory for hikers. Maybe it would be well to order a few extra pair when we order the blankets for those persons, like Tillie Wingo, who will not do what they are told."

"I believe so, too. And now, honey, please get Gwen to bring me something very simple for my supper. I believe I'll join the bread and milk club to-night and not try to eat anything heavy. I feel so sleepy I can hardly keep my eyes open. I do hope I am not going to dream about snakes. I'd sleep better if I only knew what was in the wallet I saw hanging in the tree."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE QUEST.

Perhaps Helen might have slept better had she known what was in the wallet, but it would have been difficult. Dr. Wright, accompanied by Douglas, crept silently into the tent just before the camp broke up for the night and found her pulse absolutely normal. His patient was sleeping so peacefully that he sought his hammock thoroughly contented with the treatment he had administered in the first case of snake bite that he had met in his practice.

Dawn was in the neighborhood of four o'clock. It was so still it seemed impossible that thirty persons were camping on that mountain side. The night noises had ceased. Katy-dids and tree-frogs, who had been making as much clatter as though they had been getting out a morning paper, had gone home to rest until it should be time to commence on the next edition.

This lull between night and morning lasted only a few moments and then there was "the earliest pipe of half-awakened birds." At the first sleepy note, Dr. Wright stirred in the hammock which he had stretched tightly between two giant pines a little way from the camp. He had told himself he was to awake at dawn, and now that he had done it, what was it all about? He lay still for a few moments drowsily drinking in the beauties of the dawn. A mocking bird had constituted himself waker-up of the bird kingdom since he could speak all languages. He now began to call the different bird notes and was sleepily answered from bush and tree. When he felt that a sufficient number was awake to make it worth his while, he burst into a great hymn of praise and thanksgiving; at least that was what it seemed to the young doctor, the only human being awake on that mountain side.

"I'd like to join you, old fellow, I'm so thankful that Helen is safe," and then he remembered why he had set himself the task of waking at dawn.

He slid from his hammock and in a short while

was taking the trail of the day before, back to the Devil's Gorge. It seemed but a short walk to the athletic young man as he swung his long legs, delighting in the exercise. He reached the gorge in much less than half the time it had taken the hikers of yesterday.

The morning light was clear and luminous but the gorge was as gruesome as ever. Sun light never penetrated its gloom, and Dr. Wright noticed that no birds seemed to sing there. He let himself carefully down the cliff, practicing what he had preached and looking where he stepped. In the exact spot where Helen had jumped, he saw a snake coiled as though waiting for another pretty little gray shoe to come his way.

"It may not be the same snake," muttered the young man, "but I am going to presume it is and kill him if I can."

He was standing on the ledge where Helen had been when she called to Lewis Somerville, just before the fatal leap. The wallet was in plain view, caught in a crotch of the scrub oak, and the hateful snake was curled up directly under the

tree as though put there by some evil magician to guard a secret treasure.

"You needn't look at me with your wicked eyes. I am going to kill you if I can, and why, I don't know, because I believe in a way you have done me a pretty good turn. Helen trusts me now, at least!"

He raised a great bowlder over his head and with a sure aim hurled it down on the serpent, who was even then making his strange rattle like dry leaves in the wind.

"That was your swan song, old boy," and so it was. The snake was crushed by the blow, only his tail sticking out, twitching feebly, the rattle vibrating slowly, making a faint lonesome sound.

"I think I'll take this for a souvenir!" The doctor got out one of his ever ready instruments and deftly extracted the rattle from the now harmless reptile. "Some day we may laugh over this," but I don't know why this made him blush as it did, there all by himself in the Devil's Gorge.

The rattle in his pocket, he started back up the

cliff, when he suddenly remembered his quest. "Well, by Jove, it looks as though that mysterious wallet was destined to be left in the branches of the dwarf oak!" he exclaimed, as he made his way back down to the spot and this time got the leather wallet. It was very tightly wedged into the tree, in fact, it had become incorporated, as it were, into the growth of the tree, and one of the gnarled and twisted limbs had to be cut away before he could free the object of his morning walk.

It was a bulky pocket-book, made of alligator skin which, because of its toughness, had evidently been able to withstand the weather that Dr. Wright felt sure it must have had to undergo for years, judging by the way the branches of the tree had grown around it.

"I won't open it now, but will take it to Helen. It was her find and I am not going to jump her claim."

The camp was stirring when he returned. Much shouting from the bath-house assured him that the boys were undergoing a shower of the

freezing mountain water. He waited until the last glowing, damp-haired youth filed out and then took a sprinkle himself, which refreshed him greatly but left him so hungry that the delightful odors from the open air kitchen almost maddened him. Roe herring he was sure of,—that is always unmistakable; hot rolls were holding their own in the riot of smells; bacon was asserting itself; there was a burnt sugar effect that must mean fried June apples; and threading its way through the symphony of fragrance and rising supreme over all was a coffee motive.

"Do you blame any one for stealing food when he is hungry?" he asked Gwen, whom he found in the pavilion setting the tables. "I don't."

"You have been up a long time, sir. I saw you a little after four on the trail near Aunt Mandy's."

"Were you up then?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I always get up early to milk and put the cabin in order before I come over here. It will be a little while before breakfast. Shall I get you a cup of coffee now?"

"That would be very kind of you! I am famished, and perhaps a cup of coffee would keep me from disgracing myself when breakfast is ready."

Gwen had changed a great deal in the few weeks since she had come so shyly from behind the bowlder to offer herself as factotum to Lewis and Bill. She still had the modest demeanor, but had lost her extreme shyness and also much of her primness. She was now a more natural girl of fourteen, thanks to Nan and Lucy, who had tried to make her feel at home with them. Shoes and stockings had helped her to recover from her timidity. She had always had an idea that people were looking at her bare feet. Over her skimpy little dress she now wore a bungalow apron, which was vastly becoming to her Puritan type of beauty. The first money she made had been spent on shoes and aprons. Helen had wanted to present her with these things, but Gwen and Josh were alike in wanting nothing they had not honestly earned.

As the girl came towards the doctor, bearing

in her steady little brown hands a tray with a smoking cup of coffee and a hot buttered roll, just to tide him over until breakfast, he thought he had never seen a more attractive child.

"And it wasn't because she was feeding me, either," he said to Helen later on, "but because she had such a fine upstanding look to her and because her hand was so capable and steady and her gaze so open and honest. No great lady, trained in the social graces, could have handed one a cup of coffee with more assurance and ease of manner."

"Miss Helen was asking for you," said Gwen, as she put down the delectable tray.

"Oh, is she all right?" and the physician jumped up, ready to leave his untasted food if he were needed.

"Oh, yes, she is as well as can be, and when I took her some coffee early this morning, she told me she had slept so well and was famished for food. I am going to straighten up her tent just as soon as the girls are out of it, so you can go in to see her. I told her I had seen you tak-

ing a walk at four o'clock. She wants to see you."

"I wonder if heavenly messengers wear blue aprons and tennis shoes," the young man said to himself, "because if they do, I am sure Gwen is one of them." He patted his breast pocket to make sure the bulky wallet was there, hoping it held in some way good for the little English girl but determined to say nothing about it until Helen had her first peep.

"Can it be possible that I am falling in love with Helen?" he muttered. "She is not more than seventeen, and, besides, it was only yesterday that I determined never to put myself in the way of being insulted by her again so long as I should live. Here I am starving to death (this roll and coffee will be only a drop in the bucket of my great appetite) and still I'd rather go see her than eat the breakfast I can smell cooking. I promised the father and mother to look after the children while they were taking my prescription, and this is a fine way to do it: to fall in love with one of them! Besides, Helen is not a

bit prettier than Douglas, not so clever as Nan, and so spoiled that she can be certainly very disagreeable, but still—still—she is Helen—and Bobby loves her best of all. Anyhow, I think I'll eat my breakfast first before I go to her, since she does not need my professional services."

"I never see folks eat like these here week-enders," declared Oscar, as breakfast progressed and he came to the kitchen for more hot rolls. He also brought directions from Douglas for Susan to scramble a dish of eggs for some of the late comers who found nothing but herring tails for their portion of a dish ever dear to the heart of all Virginians.

"I don't see how the young ladies 'spects to clar nothin' out'n their ventur'some if'n all the payin' guests eats ekal to these here," said Susan, as she took another pan of rolls out of the oven and put a skillet on the stove to get hot for the eggs. "I's done been to many springs an' sich with Mis Carter when I was a-nussin' of Bobby an' I never yet seed any of the pr'ietors knock up a dish er eggs fer no sleepy haids. Fus' come,

fus' serve, an' las' come satisfy theyselves with herrin' tails an' coffee drugs. Miss Gwen done made three pots er coffee already an' she mought jes' as well be pourin' it down the bottomless pit fer all the showin' it's done made. If'n these folks is gonter eat all mornin', I'd like ter know whin we's ter git the dishes washed."

"Well, dey won't need no scrapin'," laughed Oscar, as he bore away the plates heaped with crusty turnovers. "I been a-bettin' on Mr. Bill Tinsley, but looks lak Dr. Wright kin hole his own with the bes' of them."

"One thing sho," grumbled Susan, who had the customary bad humor of the Sunday morning cook, "th'ain't no use'n a clock up'n in this here camp. Whin you gits through with breakfast, it's time ter begin dinner."

CHAPTER XX.

THE WALLET.

"Did you sleep?"

"Like a top!"

"Bad dreams?" and Dr. Wright felt the pulse of the healthy looking patient, who, with the help of Gwen, had donned a very becoming boudoir cap and negligée, two articles of clothing that she had brought to camp in spite of the jeerings of her sisters, who did not see how they could be used. Helen had not had an illness since she was a child and had her tonsils out, and certainly a camp was no place to sport a filmy lace cap and a negligée of pale blue silk and lace.

"It is almost worth while having a sn—having a sprained ankle just to prove to my sisters that I was wise in bringing this cap and sacque," she had laughingly told Gwen, who was assisting her. "I bet snake bite is going to come popping out

of my mouth, willy nilly," she said to herself. "I almost gave it away that time."

Gwen, who loved pretty things and scented from afar the admiration Dr. Wright was beginning to hold for Helen, considered it very wise to have brought the dainty garments. She could not help thinking, with something akin to bitterness, of her own yellow cotton night gowns that Aunt Mandy considered superfluous articles of clothing; and of the coarse, gray flannel bed-sacque she had worn the summer before when she had caught the measles from Josh; and of how she must have looked when the old country doctor came to see her.

The tent was tidy and sweet when George Wright entered to see how his patient fared. Gwen had spread the steamer rugs over the cots and had even placed a bunch of honeysuckle on the little table at Helen's bedside. She had had to purloin the table from Miss Somerville's cabin, but that lady was willing to give up more than a table for her favorite young cousin.

Helen blushed a little when the young man

asked her if she had had any bad dreams. The fact was she had had very pleasant dreams in which he had largely figured. She had dreamed that Josephus had turned into Pegasus and that, as she flew along on his shapely back, she had met Dr. Wright floating by on a white cloud and he had wanted to feel her pulse. She had put out her hand and as he felt her pulse, he had jumped from the white cloud square onto the back of Pegasus, and together they rode through the air, the winged horse looking kindly on them with much the benevolent expression of Josephus.

"No, my dreams were pleasant," she smiled.

Dr. Wright certainly took a long time to feel any one's pulse, but the truth was that he had forgotten to count, so taken up he was with the fact that pale blue was quite as becoming to Helen as gray with a dash of scarlet. I think if he had felt his own pulse, he would have been astonished at how far from normal his heart beats were at that moment.

"I have brought you the wallet from the Devil's Gorge. Here it is for you to open!"

"Oh, Dr. Wright! Is that where you were going when Gwen saw you so early this morning?"

"Yes!"

"I think you are very good to take that tramp for Gwen," she said, taking the bulky wallet in her hand.

"I didn't take it for Gwen, but for you." Gwen had left the tent for a moment.

"But you would have done it for Gwen, I am sure."

"Yes, of course, but perhaps not on an empty stomach," laughed the doctor. "But why don't you open the pocketbook?"

"Because it is Gwen's! She must be the one to open it."

"But you are not sure it is hers. I brought it for you to have the pleasure of opening it."

"Yes, I am sure it is hers, and I'd take more pleasure in seeing her open it than doing it myself."

Just then Gwen returned with a pitcher of fresh water. Helen held up the wallet and said:

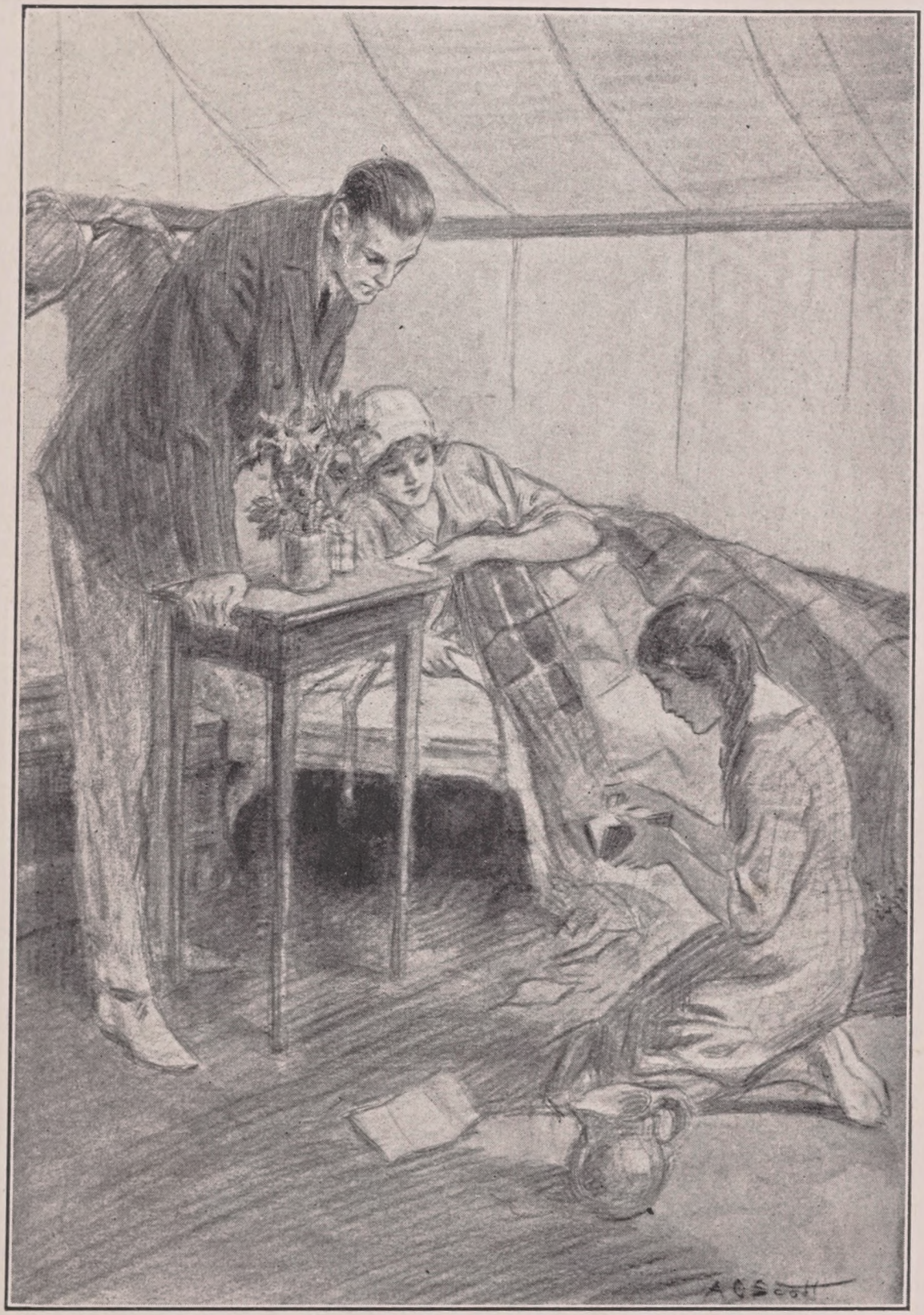
"Did you ever see this before?"

Gwen turned pale and her steady little hands, that could usually carry a brimming cup of coffee safely to its destination without once slopping over, shook so that she spilled the water from the pitcher.

"Oh, Miss Helen! Where did you find it?"

"Never mind now where we found it! You open it and see if you can identify it," said Helen kindly. She realized that Gwen was to have excitement enough in opening this wallet of her father's, lost as it had been for five years, without having to picture, as she would surely do, his death, the fall from the cliff and this pocketbook slipping from his coat and lodging in the tree.

The wallet was evidently an expensive one: alligator skin lined with Russian leather. The silver clasp was rusty and Gwen's trembling hands could hardly force the sliding catch, but Helen motioned for Dr. Wright not to assist her. She felt, somehow, that the girl would rather do it all herself. They were silent while the



They were silent while the little English girl fumbled the lock—*Page 287*

little English girl fumbled the lock and finally sprung it. The wallet was stuffed full of papers and letters. In one compartment was some silver, several gold pieces and some English coins. The papers were yellow with age, but so stout was the alligator skin that the many rains that must have fallen during the five years the wallet had been wedged in that scrub oak's branches, had not wet them nor defaced them.

"Be very careful, Gwen, there may be all kinds of precious documents in there," exclaimed Helen, as some of the papers floated to the floor of the tent and some fluttered to her own cot.

Gwen had sunk to the floor in a little heap and was sobbing.

"I can remember so well how my father used to open up this pocketbook and pore over these letters. I was never allowed to touch it. He kept his money in it and receipts and things."

"Look, here is a receipt for one thousand dollars in cash payment for land!" exclaimed Helen, as a yellow slip of paper fell on her coverlet,

The paper was written in a bold black hand so that any one might read it:

Received payment from St. John Brownell for 100 acres of land at Greendale, Albemarle County, Va. $1,000 in cash.

(Signed) ABNER DEAN.

The signature was in violet ink and very shaky. Helen recognized it as old Dean's writing, as when he sent up any produce to the camp from his store at Greendale, it had been her duty to go over the bill which invariably accompanied the goods.

"Why, Gwen, Gwen! That old wretch has cheated you out of your land! Do you know, he handed over to Father, for money he owed him, land that did not belong to him, and this minute our camp is built on your property?" Helen was very much excited, and as for Gwen,—she was pale and trembling. "I'd like to get up out of this bed and go horse-whip him——"

"Please, can I do it for you?" from the doctor. "But wouldn't it be better to get a lawyer to

take the matter up and have the thing legally adjusted?"

"We-e-ll, ye-s! Maybe—— But I'd certainly like to make that old man suffer some. Wouldn't you, Gwen?" But the little English girl was so busy sorting the papers that had fallen from her father's old wallet that she did not hear.

"What is that in the back of the pocketbook where the other fastening is?" asked the doctor.

"Money and more money! Why, Gwen, look at the bills!"

Helen was right. In a neat and orderly manner in yet another closed compartment of the wallet were placed greenbacks and yellowbacks of high denominations. The girls feverishly counted out $1,500.

"No wonder it was so fat! We had better not say anything about having all this money in camp. It ought to be in the bank, Gwen, as it might be stolen from you. Dr. Wright will deposit it for you in Richmond and you can draw on it as you need."

Gwen handed over the bills to the young man without a moment's delay.

"Wait now, let's count it again to make sure, and I will give you a receipt for the amount."

"Oh, that's not necessary, is it, Miss Helen?"

"Certainly not!" And then Helen blushed to think how short a time had elapsed since she had expressed all kinds of doubts about the honesty of this man, because, forsooth, he had been given power of attorney over a paltry $83.59! Here she was advising this little mountain waif to hand over to Dr. Wright what seemed to them a large fortune without even a receipt.

George Wright smiled and quietly wrote a receipt for the amount.

"It would be safer to let me carry this money for you because it might get out that you have it, and it would be easier to get it from you than me. I will deposit it at the Virginia Trust Co. in Richmond, and will send you the bank book immediately. You can invest it or not as you see fit. It would bring in forty-five dollars a year if you put it in the savings bank."

"Oh, that would be enough for me to go to school on and even be a boarder at school! But I want some of it to buy a new mule for Aunt Mandy. Josephus is so old and feeble."

"You had better not tell Josh you think so," laughed the doctor. "But will you be contented, child, just to stay on in the mountains for the rest of your life?"

"This is the only home I have. Where else can I go?"

"You can go wherever we are," cried Helen impulsively, and Dr. Wright's admiration for her was increased if possible.

"Oh, Miss Helen, you are so good! But Aunt Mandy needs me and maybe if I stay here I can make Josh wash, even in the winter time."

"Well, maybe you can," said the doctor kindly, "and it is a great thing to be needed and to see some chance of improving your fellow man. You could, with economy, get yourself through college on this money."

"And then, of course, you own the land our

camp is built on," remembered Helen. "That is a thousand dollars more."

"But I don't want that," exclaimed Gwen. "It has been so wonderful to have all of you here and so good to me."

"But, my dear child, the land belongs to you and this Abner Dean will have to be the one to suffer, not you or the Carters. If you will let me, I will consult a lawyer in Richmond and have him take hold of the matter. Don't you find a deed of some sort among those papers?"

There was no deed among the papers and, in fact, one never was found. The mystery was never solved how such an intelligent man as St. John Brownell evidently was had contented himself with a mere receipt for the $1,000 paid Abner Dean. He was perhaps suffering so with the nervous complaint which finally caused his death, that he had accepted the simplest method which presented itself to establish himself in a place where he hoped to find some peace.

While Helen was confined to her couch with the spurious sprained ankle, she helped Gwen un-

ravel the story of her life from the letters found in the wonderful wallet. It was not such an extraordinary story, after all. St. John Brownell was of good family and education but evidently of small means, being the younger son of one of the many daughters of an impoverished earl. He had married young, come to America, and taken up teaching as a profession. His wife had died and then had come on him the strange malady that had caused him so much agony. Cities were hateful to him and he had decided that his small patrimony would serve best in some locality where the living was very inexpensive. Helen gathered from some of the letters that this patrimony amounted to about $3,000. He seemed to have arrived in the mountains with that much money in cash. He had bought the one hundred acres of land on the side of the mountain, hoping to improve it, possibly by going into Albemarle pippins. Gwen thought he had perhaps put his money into cash expecting to place it in a bank in Virginia; but as his malady gained on him all money dealings became very hateful and

irksome to him, and he had evidently procrastinated until he had become in the habit of just carrying that roll of money around with him.

Gwen could recall nothing of her mother, but she remembered being in a kindergarten in New York and of course remembered coming to Virginia, and her father's every characteristic was as fresh in her mind as though he had died only yesterday. The poor man had never been too miserable to be anything but gentle and loving to his little daughter, and he had spared no pains in teaching her, so that at nine years, her age when he had died, Gwen had been quite as well educated as many a child of twelve.

"Aren't you going to write to some of your father's family, Gwen?" asked Helen, who had become so absorbed in the research that she felt like a full-fledged detective.

"I think not," and Gwen shook her head sadly. "He must have gone completely out of their lives. I can't remember his getting any letters after we came to Virginia. Some day, maybe, I can make enough money to go to England, and then

I will hunt them up and peep at them through the shutters, and if they look kind and nice, I'll make myself known to them."

"Perhaps you are right. They may be all kinds of pills and they might come over here and take you back with them whether you wanted to go or not. And you might have to live in stuffy chambers in London and never see the mountains any more."

"Dreadful! That would kill me!"

And so Gwen went on living with kind Aunt Mandy, little by little cleaning up that good woman until she became reconciled to water and almost fond of it.

George Wright consulted a lawyer friend who took Gwen's affairs in hand and by skillful management brought old Abner Dean to the realization that it would be best for him to execute a deed to the land bought by St. John Brownell, arranging it so Gwen would own the property without any string tied to it. He was forced to pay the money to Mr. Carter, and then the girls, having unwittingly built on Gwen's land, rented

it from her. Land had increased twofold in value since the Englishman had made his purchase, and the timber had grown so there was every indication that by careful management Gwen would have a good deal more money to add to her bank account.

Before Dr. Wright went back to Richmond, he told Helen he had killed the snake, if not the one who had taken a nip out of her tendon Achilles, at least one just as good or just as bad, whichever way she chose to look at it.

"Poor old snake!" exclaimed Helen. "He shouldn't have been punished for acting according to his nature. I am the one that should have been punished, because I hope I acted not according to my nature."

"Well, haven't you been punished?"

Helen said nothing. She felt in her heart that she had not been punished at all but had been favored, in that through that rattlesnake she had gained a real friend in the young doctor.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHERE IS BOBBY?

"Where is Bobby, Helen?" asked Douglas, coming into the tent where Helen was having an enforced invalidism. She had promised Dr. Wright to be quiet until he returned to camp, which he was planning to do in a week.

"I want to make you glad to see me and if my coming means you are no longer in durance vile I know I shall be welcome," he had said when he told her good-by after a little more pulse taking.

"We shall always be glad to have you," she had replied impersonally. He did think she might have used a singular pronoun but he was grateful to her for any small scrap of politeness. As for Helen, it was difficult for her to get over a certain sharpness of manner she had up to this time carefully kept for the young physician. When she had fooled herself into thinking she hated him there had been times when she had for-

gotten to be rude in spite of her intentions and now, when she meant to be mild and gentle, sometimes the old habit of studied disagreeableness got the better of her. That long week of enforced idleness had chastened her spirit wonderfully. She was so gentle that Douglas sometimes thought maybe she was ill. The rattler seemed to have extracted the poison from her system, rather than injected it.

"Only one more day!" she was thinking when Douglas came in. Dr. Wright was expected on the morrow and then she could be up and doing once more. There were absolutely no ill effects from the wound and that tiny excuse for a bandage had wholly disappeared. It seemed foolish to be nursing up herself like this, but then she had promised and Helen Carter never broke her word.

"Bobby, you say? Why, he must have gone with Josh."

"No, Josh was to go a long way for some chickens and I thought Bobby would get too tired."

"Maybe Lewis took him to the station with him."

"Of course! I hear the goat chugging up the mountain now. I'll go see."

But no Bobby!

The mountain goat was laden with packages and two previous boarders who could not wait for the week-end to return to camp. No one had seen Bobby for hours and hours it developed on investigation.

"He done pestered the life out'n me all mornin'," declared Oscar, "an' I done tol' him go fin' Susan and worry her some."

"Yes, an' I sint him back to you."

"Well, he ain't never come."

"He came to me for a story," confessed Nan, "but I was so interested in my book I couldn't stop. I'm so sorry."

"He wanted to go with Lil and me but we didn't want him tagging on," and Lucy looked ready to weep.

"He came to me and wanted me to build a log cabin out of sticks but I had my accounts to go

over," groaned Douglas. "I sent him to Helen but she hasn't seen him."

"Well, he is around somewhere," comforted Lewis.

"Sure!" declared Bill. "All hands turn out and hunt."

The sisters all felt guilty consciences for not having looked after their little brother, all but Helen, who was the only one who had not seen him.

"I was the only one who had time for him and I am the only one he didn't come to," she cried. "If I only hadn't promised Dr. Wright to stay still until he got here! I know I could find Bobby."

"But, honey, there are lots of hunters and you must do what the doctor told you," begged Douglas.

"Oh, I'll mind him all right—that is unless Bobby stays lost too long and then I'll have to get up and break my word if I lose my immortal soul in the act."

Staying still while the hue and cry for her dear

little brother was going on was about the hardest job Helen Carter ever undertook. She imagined all sorts of terrible things. Maybe gypsies had stolen him. Maybe a rattlesnake had bitten him and he was even now dying from it. Maybe he had fallen down the mountain side and had dashed his brains out on some boulder. Worse than anything he might be lost forever, wandering over the mountains trying to find his way home, crying and calling, scared almost to death, tired and hungry, dying finally of starvation and exposure.

Taking Bill's advice, all hands turned out to hunt for the lost boy. In five minutes Helen was the only person left in camp, even Miss Elizabeth Somerville and the newly arrived boarders joining in the search. There were many paths leading from camp and up and down these the crowd scattered.

Dear little Bobby! No one thought him a nuisance now. Nan and Gwen made their way to Aunt Mandy's cabin, thinking perhaps he had gone there in search of Josh. Aunt Mandy came

out with kindly words of discouragement and gruesome tales of a child her mother told her of who wandered off and never was found.

"That there Bobby looks like a angel anyhow. Children like him is hard to raise. We uns is been a tellin' of Gwen and Josh that Bobby is too purty for a boy. He looks to we uns more like a gal angel." Gwen tried to stop her but the old woman went on until Nan was almost in tears. If she had not been so distressed she would have found this amusing, but with Bobby gone for hours a sense of humor did not help much.

"Oh, Gwen! Where can he be?"

"Let's keep on down this path for a while. He and Josh often go this way."

"If Josh would only come! I know he could find him."

"He will be found soon, I am sure. His little legs cannot carry him very far and I am sure he would not get out of the trails. He may be back at camp now. You turn back and let me follow this trail for a mile or so. You are tired, I know."

"No, indeed, I'm not; if I were it would serve me right. If only I had stopped and told him a story! I am so selfish when I get steeped in a book. What will Mother say if Bobby is lost?"

"Oh, but I am sure we will find him."

The girls wandered on, stopping every now and then to call to the lost child. Sometimes they would be answered by an echo and then would stop and listen and call again.

Douglas got in the car with Lewis, who whisked her down the mountain side to the station.

"Maybe he has carried out his threat of running away. He is always saying he is going back to Richmond when he gets tired of the camp, which he does occasionally when he has nothing to occupy him. If I had only stopped adding up expenses and built the log cabin for him! I have neglected him, I am sure—and what will Father and Mother say? I wish I had let him go with Josh. He always takes such good care of him."

"We are going to find him, Douglas, I feel

sure. Why, the little shaver could not walk very far."

He was not at the station and no one had seen him. Old Abner Dean came out of his store and actually seemed to feel some concern for the boy. He was a hard old man but not hard enough to resist the charm of Bobby's eyes.

"He could not have come to the station without some one seeing him, and now I am going to take you home. He may be found by this time and if he is not I'll start out again. There is no use in your going," said Lewis, feeling very sorry for the distracted sister and very uneasy himself in spite of his repeated assurances to Douglas that the little shaver was all right wherever he might be.

"First let's go down this road a little way. He might have turned off before he got to the station. He knows that this is the road Josephus and Josh took this morning."

"All right! Anywhere that there is a chance of finding him!"

Lucy and Lil with Frank and his friend

Skeeter, went over the mountain. Lucy and Lil were feeling very much cut up that they had refused to let poor little Bobby tag along earlier in the day.

"I should have taken him with me," wailed Lucy. "Maybe I can never take care of him again. S'pose wild cats get him."

"But they wouldn't attack in daylight," declared Frank.

"But we might not find him before dark and wolves and snakes and wild cats and all kinds of things might get him. I promised Mother I'd be good to him, too." Lucy was sniffing dismally and Lil joined her friend in her demonstration of woe.

They came to the reservoir where Bobby loved to play and was not allowed to come alone. It was not deep but then a little child does not need much water to drown in.

"It is so clear that if he is in the bottom we can see him, that's one comfort," suggested Skeeter, but the rest of them could not extract much joy from the fact.

"I am scared to look in!" exclaimed Lucy, hiding her eyes.

"Nothing in there but a bullfrog," reassured Frank, so they left the reservoir and climbed on up the mountain.

Susan and Oscar took the path around the mountain. The two devoted servants were so deeply concerned about their darling Bobby, very precious now that he was lost, that they felt there was no way to express their concern but by quarreling with each other.

"Whin I sint him to you, why'n you keep keer er him?" grumbled Oscar.

"Wherefore you didn't keep keer er him yo' se'f?"

"I ain't no nuss!"

"Me neither! I done hi'ed out fur a housemaid. I is demeanin' of my rightful oaths to be adoin' what I is. If the haid of our sassiety should git wind of all the occupations I is a occupying I ain't got a doubt she would read me out in meetin'."

"Well, nobody ain't a goin' to blow 'bout what

wuck you does but yo'se'f. I can't see but what you keeps to yo' vows well enough. If lookin' after chillums aint 'ooman's wuck I lak to know what is."

Every now and then they stopped their wrangling to shout for the lost boy.

"Bo—oob—by! You, Bo—oob—by! I got some ca—an—dy fur yer," called Susan.

"'Andyfuryer!" came back from the next mountain.

"Thar he is!" declared Oscar.

"Thar he is much! That there is what Miss Nan calls a ego. It's some kind er a beast I reckon what mocks folks. Sounds lak hants ter me. I done dream of trouble last night anyhow. I dream I was a gittin' married—"

"That would sho' be trouble to the groom," chuckled Oscar.

"My dream book says that dreamin' of marriage is sho sign er death. I reckon our little Bobby is dead by this time. Out here cold and starved in the mountings."

"Well, he done et a good breakfast this morn-

in' and ain't starved yit as 'tain't time ter dish up dinner yit. An' if he is cold I'd lak ter know whar he done foun' a cool spot. I sho is a sweatin' myse'f."

"Go 'long, you ole nigger! You ain't got no feelin'."

"I's got as much feelin' as you is but I's got enough ter worry 'bout without makin' up troubles. I want ter find that there Bobby an' I feel turrible bad 'bout his a gittin' lost but I ain't agoin' ter trouble my haid about his bein' cold and hongry whin the sun is a shinin' down on my back as hot as a mustard plarster an' I done see the boy put away two full batches of waffles with enough scrambled eggs to feed a whole fambly. His appletite done pick up wonderful sense we been a campin' out."

Miss Elizabeth Somerville had to help in the search, too, although Bill Tinsley tried to persuade her that he and Tillie Wingo could do her part and she had better go back to the pavilion, but go she would down the rocky path.

" 'Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child;

but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him,' " she declaimed grimly. "If I had my way I should give that child a good whipping when he is found. He knows perfectly well he should not have gone off without asking."

The search kept up for more than an hour and still no sign of little Bobby. Even the most cheerfully sanguine of the campers began to feel dubious. Helen lay on her cot in an agony of suspense. The search party had none of them returned. She began to fear that the worst might have happened to her beloved little brother. If she could only get up and help! She regretted the promise she had made Dr. Wright. How could she stay still until the next day? She knew she could find Bobby if any one could. Did he not love her best of all the sisters? How strange that he had not come to her when Douglas sent him! She would have told him stories and amused him.

"Maybe he did come while I was taking that little nap," she thought. "It was only for a moment that I dozed off and usually he is quick

enough to awaken any one who is sleeping." The truth of the matter was that Bobby was loath to have anybody sleep. He was famous as a waker.

"There is a car! I hear it coming up the mountain. I do hope it is Douglas and she has got him."

She waited what seemed hours but was in reality but a minute.

"Douglas!" she called. "Lewis! Somebody! Have you found him?" Her voice rang out very loud in the empty camp.

"May I come in?" Dr. Wright's voice just outside her tent.

"Oh, Dr. Wright! Bobby is lost! May I get up and help hunt? I'm so glad you have come!"

"So am I. I was called to Charlottesville in consultation and came on up here for a visit. Tell me about Bobby."

"He's been lost for hours and hours. Everybody is out hunting and I promised I'd stay here until you came, but oh, Dr. Wright, it has been hard to keep my word."

"You poor little girl! But you mustn't worry,

Bobby can take care of himself anywhere he happens to be."

"You bet I can!" came from under Helen's cot and then a tousled sleepy little figure followed the voice.

"Oh, Bobby, Bobby!" cried Helen, hugging the little wretch close in her arms. "Didn't you know we were nearly scared to death about you?"

"Nope! How's I to know? I drap off to sleep, I reckon. I was so tired er gettin' driv from one to the tother all mornin' that I got so sleepy I couldn't stay awake. When I got driv to you by Douglas and found you snoozin' I jes' crawled in under your bed and must a snoozed some myself."

"To think of his being right here all the time! Please go tell the rest he is found. Tell them I found him."

"Yes, tell 'em Helen is wuth mor'n all of them put together. She kin do more findin' of things lyin' up in the bed than all the crowd can a huntin' all over the mountain."

Bobby soon became the center of attraction.

Everybody had to give him a hug and everybody was sorry they had "driv" him off. Douglas promised him an Indian outfit; Nan promised to tell him all the stories she knew; Lucy invited him to tag along with her whenever he wanted to; Lewis Somerville gave him a new knife if he promised never to use it unless Josh was with him to pick up the pieces he cut off himself; Susan immediately put on some molasses to cook for an always welcome candy pulling; Oscar gave him an especial invitation to a chicken picking he was to hold that afternoon.

Helen was allowed to get up by the cautious young doctor since the snake bite was entirely gone. Her manner to him was so gentle he could not help feeling that he himself, as well as a physician who was releasing her, was welcome to the camp.

During this visit Dr. Wright found much food for thought—serious and otherwise. As he watched the Carter girls, happily active in their daily tasks, bravely puzzling over their problems

in economy, unselfishly entertaining their week-end guests, he contrasted their life on the side of the mountain in Albemarle with the sheltered existence they had known—and marveled and rejoiced.

The summer was doing wonderful things for all the members of the camping party. Miss Somerville had seen a sunrise and had waxed enthusiastic over it. Susan had learned to sleep with her windows open and to realize that some of her dreams were indicative of what had happened rather than what was going to happen. Namely! a fearful dream she had had of fresh meat did not mean sure death, as the dream book said, but that she had eaten too much beefsteak the night before. Oscar had learned that there was a lot of good in po' whites when once they began to wash. Josh, in turn, had learned the value of cold water on character as well as hide.

Lewis Somerville and his chum, Bill, had learned the power of honest toil to assuage the mental anguish they had had to contend with because of their interrupted careers. They were

planning for the future instead of looking back and regretting the past. Bobby was learning more than any of the party. He had learned how to find a bee tree and where the sparrow hawk nests; he had learned how to skin up any tree he could get his arms around and how to slide down without barking his shins; he had learned how to scrooch up his toes when the path was stony and not hurt his feet walking in briars. Josh was his tutor and had even taught him when to say we uns and you allses. Josephus had learned where to go for lump sugar, and whenever Helen appeared, the old mule limped after her, putting his head on one side and singing like a canary bird; at least, that was what Nan said he did.

So even Josephus could be numbered among those who had benefited by the healthful, unselfish, out-of-door life on the mountain side. Lucy, perhaps, of all the Carter girls, had changed the least under the new influences. Her attitude toward the world in general and Helen in particular remained about the same: she was adoring

and belligerent, imitative and rebellious, as variable as a weather vane in March.

The fact that Helen had been bitten by a snake was carefully kept from Lucy for fear she would go do likewise. She tried very hard to stay in bed one day with a would-be sprained ankle, but the delights of the mountains were too alluring. She hobbled out of bed before the day was over and by evening was fox trotting with Skeeter, who, by the way, had answered Frank Maury's letter in person by return mail.

But if Lucy took the business end of the summer venture lightly, Douglas, Helen and Nan shouldered its responsibilities seriously and gloried in its success. Their enthusiasm did not wane nor did their determination falter: their father should not be burdened by debts on his homecoming.

How they clung to their purpose and how they met the remaining experiences of the summer, their friends may discover, if they will, in "The Carter Girls' Week-End Camp."

THE END.

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